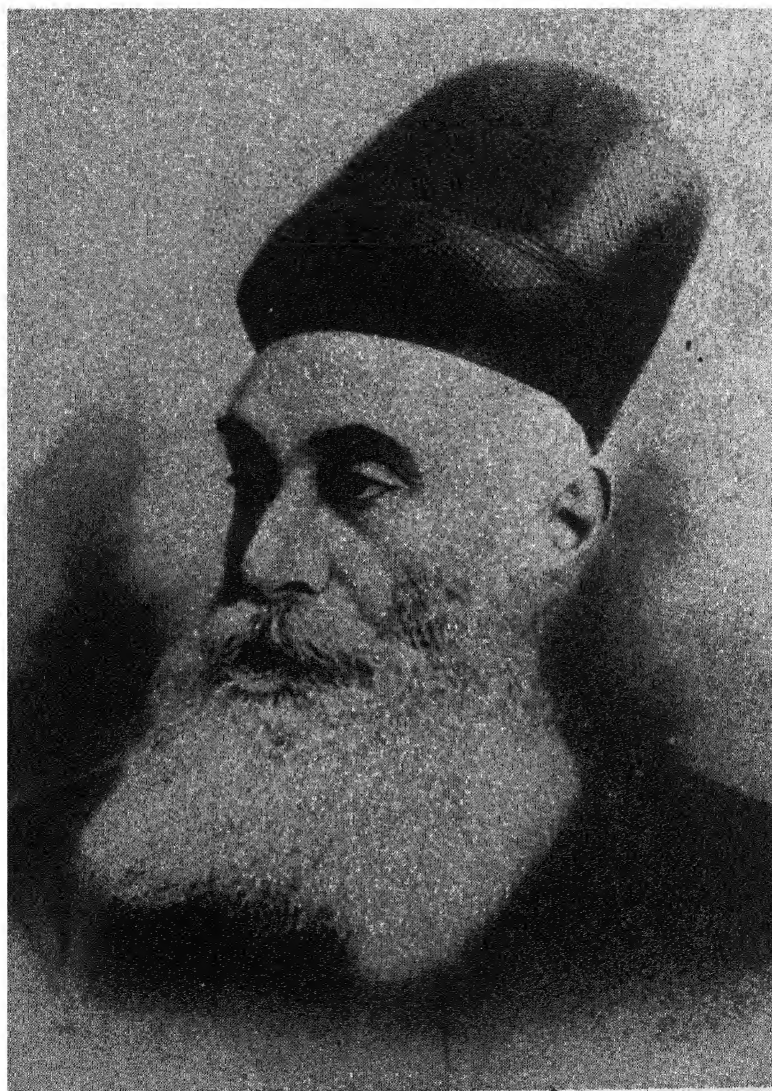


BUILDERS OF MODERN INDIA

JAMSETJI TATA

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION



JAMSETJI TATA

ABOUT THE SERIES

The object of the Series is the publication of biographies of those eminent sons and daughters of India who have been mainly instrumental in our national renaissance and the struggle for independence.

It is essential for the present and coming generations to know something about these great men and women. Except in a few cases, no authoritative biographies are available. The Series has been planned to remove this lacuna and comprises handy volumes containing simple and short biographies of our eminent leaders written by competent persons who know their subject well. The books in this Series are not intended either to be comprehensive studies or to replace more elaborate biographies.

Though desirable, it may not be possible to publish the biographies in a chronological order. The work of writing these lives has to be entrusted to persons who are well equipped to do so and, therefore, for practical reasons, it is possible that there might be no historical sequence observed. It is hoped, however, that within a short period all eminent national personalities will figure in this Series.

Shri R. R. Diwakar is the General Editor of the Series.

A list of works already published and of those which are in the press is given at the end.

Builders of Modern India

JAMSETJI TATA

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AND

K. KHOSLA

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
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PREFACE

THE world has produced many great men, each of whom has made himself memorable through his activities in one particular field. There are other rarer spirits who, with a broader vision and a wider genius, have made their mark in many and diverse activities.

Jamsetji Tata may be counted among the latter. He would have gained immortality merely as the founder of the steel industry in India; he would also have been remembered had his work in the textile industry been his only achievement. Add to this his passionate interest in education, his foundation of the Institute of Science and his numerous and wide-ranging experiments and successes in other industries, and we obtain some measure of the man.

Too often we think of great men as people totally unlike ourselves, awesome, remote and unapproachable. To read through Jamsetji Tata's diaries, letters and articles is to realise that this is not always true. For all his visionary outlook, his feet were planted firmly on the ground and his sense of what was practical gave purpose and shape to his broad conceptions. The warmth of his feelings towards his family, his passion for innovation, his curiosity and the vivid interest he evinced in so many fields, present a very human picture. He had a ready sense of humour, a delightful irony and a fondness for pricking the bubbles of illusion and pomposity. His diary especially gives us the impression of one who looked on the world, its follies and its weaknesses, with a chuckle.

The purpose of this book is to try to record something of his personality and character. The clothes he wore, the

food he was so fond of, the books he read, the journeys upon which his curiosity took him—these have been our raw material rather than the statistics and facts of industry.

The achievements of the house of Tata, both in his own time and today, are well known. Its enlightened attitude, its human approach to all problems and the continued seeking after what is economically best for India, are attributes that the world knows well. What is of absorbing interest is to see how many of these virtues flowed out of the personality of one man. The force of his example and the memory of his achievement, both as an industrialist and as a benefactor of education and the arts, have always guided the destiny of his house and reinforced the abilities of his successors.

To write this book has been a great privilege. The task has taken us to the records of the Government of India in the nineteenth century, to the correspondence that passed between Jamsetji and the authorities in London, to the articles and letters that he wrote for the press, and to much other fascinating material.

The more closely one studies his life, the more one is struck by the extent to which he was ahead of his time. Half a century before India began her conscious movement towards industrialization, and before she moved forward under a system of planning, Jamsetji was thinking in just those terms and achieving quite extraordinary results.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Tata Iron & Steel Company in 1957, visited Jamshedpur and paid a generous tribute to him. Pandit Nehru said: "Today we have had a series of five-year plans but Jamsetji formed himself into some kind of a planning commission and began his own five-year plan, indeed not a five-year but a much bigger plan."

In the same speech, Jawaharlal Nehru reminded us of the courage that was needed in those pioneer days and said:

“When you have to give the lead in action, in ideas—a lead which does not fit in with the very climate of opinion, that is true courage, physical or mental or spiritual, call it what you like, and it is this type of courage and vision that Jamsetji Tata showed, and it is right that we should honour his memory and remember him as one of the big founders of modern India.”

The work of many men and women has gone into the building of modern India. Much stress has been laid upon the contribution made by those who worked in the political field and who laid the foundations of independence. But it is timely to remember that without economic independence political independence can neither thrive nor endure. The work of Jamsetji Tata in establishing modern industries in India, and in demonstrating that such industries could be built and could prosper, has played a vital part in the development of the country.

B. Sh. Saklatvala
K. Khosla

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CHAPTER ONE

PROLOGUE—THE EARLY YEARS (1839-1858)

IN the summer of 1904, at Bad Nauheim in Germany, Jamsetji Tata, one of the greatest figures of the nineteenth century, lay dying. His life had embraced a truly exceptional range of accomplishments.

Amongst his many achievements he had helped pioneer India's textile industry; he had built Bombay's first modern hotel and planned a hydro-electric scheme which was to make India among the first countries in the world to exploit its natural resources for this purpose; he had inaugurated an institute of science and conceived the then revolutionary idea of a modern iron and steel industry in India; he had set up fruit-farms, experimented with horticulture and advanced the production of silk. But in his own eyes perhaps his greatest achievement was the lustre he had brought to the family name of Tata and the honour and reputation he had earned for it.

When Jamsetji was born, the world was still being run by a generation born in the eighteenth century. Merchandise was still carried across the seas in sailing ships or overland by horse and bullock. The world was still in the era of the stagecoach. There were no railways in the whole of India, which was then dominated by the East India Company.

By the time Jamsetji died, however, the modern world had come to life. Railways linked city with city and country with country. The motor-car had arrived. Modern industry and modern communications had changed the world scene. Man-made power—steam and electricity—had given to man a strength and speed greater than he could derive

from his own physical efforts.

To the dramatic changes which had taken place between his birth and his death, Jamsetji Tata had himself massively contributed. When we pause to consider how remote from our own bustling times was the world into which he was born and how close to our own was the world in which he died, we get some measure of his immense achievement. Born before the nineteenth century had taken shape, he brought India to the threshold of the twentieth century. He was one of those who laid the foundations of modern India.

Jamsetji Tata's accomplishments were the fruits of a rich imagination, an innovating mind and an almost limitless range of interests.

It was clear to him that for India to gain economic independence (and he saw that without such independence political freedom had no meaning) she required three things: power for her industries, trained scientists for her economic development and iron and steel on which to base her industry. To these three major goals he devoted the final years of his life and much of his fortune. The enduring results of this conception are the iron and steel works at Jamshedpur, the hydro-electric schemes outside Bombay and the Indian Institute of Science at Bangalore—all the three founded by Jamsetji Tata.

It is said that the art of spending is the art of life. Jamsetji knew this art. He knew not only how to earn a fortune, but also how best to spend it. He was well known for his charity, although his approach to it was (as to everything else) essentially practical. He did not spend his money on the construction of fire temples, nor did he seek rewards in heaven for his many generous benefactions.

To judge Jamsetji Tata by his worldly success or affluence is to miss the true stature of the man. For wealth to

him was but a means to an end. The end was the good of the nation, its economic advancement, its prosperity. Like all geniuses, he left much of his work unfinished, and many of his dreams unfulfilled. But those plans and those dreams did not die with him. He left a legacy not merely of opportunity but also of duty. And this duty—to translate into reality his own visions—was swiftly taken up by his successors.

Jamsetji did not die when alone; his partner and cousin R. D. Tata was with him constantly, as was one of his nephews, B. D. Saklatvala. He gave his cousin a watch containing his mother's portrait and a lock of her hair, confiding to him his last thoughts. On the cousin's mention of the honour that Jamsetji had earned for the family name, the dying man said: "If you cannot make it greater, at least preserve it. Do not let things slide. Go on doing my work and increasing it, but if you cannot, do not lose what we have already done."

The Tata antecedents were part of a movement, beginning in the eighth century, in which large numbers of Parsees left Persia for India after the Arab invasion. One of the chief centres in India where they came and settled was Navsari, and it was here that Jamsetji's ancestors lived for more than twenty-five generations as priests. But they did not bear the name of Tata from the beginning. According to the pedigree of the family, it was one Beram who was the first to assume this name, and he represented the sixteenth generation from their coming into India.

It was in 1822 that one Nusserwanji Tata was born in humble circumstances at Navsari and five years later he was betrothed in accordance with the Parsee rites. While he was still a child, a fortune-teller singled him out and said: "This boy will travel, he will become rich, and build a house with seven storeys." At the time the family thought

this prophecy absurd, but to mock it was to reckon without the man; shrewd and enterprising as he was, his success ultimately enabled him to fulfil the prophecy. For he did travel, become rich and in fact did buy a house in Bombay with seven storeys.

On the 3rd March, 1839, when Nusserwanji was no more than seventeen years old, his only son Jamsetji was born. The only thing that we know about Jamsetji's early life is that he was initiated into the various religious rites and ordained as a priest. Jamsetji received no formal education during those years, since the country at that stage had no properly developed policy for education. However, when Jamsetji was thirteen years old, his father took him to Bombay where he arranged for the boy to attend a few classes held by local pundits. In January 1856, as he showed exceptional promise, he was awarded a free studentship at Elphinstone College where he underwent a liberal education and developed a passion for reading which remained with him all his life. While still at college, he married a Parsee girl called Heerabai, five years younger than he and the daughter of a priest. It is said that Nusserwanji chose Heerabai because she had a mole which was considered auspicious and he thought that she would bring luck to his son. In 1858, Jamsetji obtained his degree and left college.

Politically, this was a period of strife and disturbance and one during which British rule expanded over wider areas of India. Parallel to this was the changing attitude of the British to the Indians, who were beginning to be regarded as inferior in every respect. Perhaps this new attitude was motivated by fear and the need for the minority to dominate psychologically as well as militarily.

Economically, the country had already witnessed the beginning of steam transport by river and ocean in 1835, of tea and coffee plantation, of minor iron and coal

production, as well as the planning of a road network, drainage projects and irrigation canals. And, of course, the improvement in communications—brought about by the construction of railways and telegraph lines—furnished a great stimulus to the growth of industry and trade. In the field of education the English language and western ideas generally were taking root.

It was amid these conditions that Jamsetji began his business career.

CHAPTER TWO

BEGINNINGS OF A BUSINESS CAREER (1858-1867)

JAMSETJI had great faith in the conception of a liberal education. Such an education, he believed, provided a sound and solid basis for a business career. He was evidently aware of the cramping effects of too narrow specialisation and appreciated that a good administrator must throw his mind beyond the frontiers of his speciality, in order to view his problems from all sides, taking into account both present and future requirements. He must have an expanding vision, and—as knowledge does not stand still—he must be open to new ideas and be adaptable to shifting circumstances. He must be humane and have understanding; equally important is his ability to communicate. These are some of the qualities which an effective administrator must possess, and which a liberal education, whether by itself or as a proper supplement to technical or scientific knowledge, helps to foster.

Planning to pursue one of the learned professions, Jamsetji joined a solicitor's office. But this association was not to last long. In 1859, when he was only twenty years old, his first son Dorabji was born at his mother-in-law's house. This event at once increased his financial responsibilities and he left the solicitor's office to join his father's business. Equipped with a sound academic background and receiving guidance from his father, Jamsetji very quickly acquired a good knowledge of trade and commerce and, armed with this knowledge, he was immediately sent on behalf of his father's firm to assist in the development of the China trade.

December 1859 saw the opening of a new branch in Hong Kong. It bore the name of Jamsetji and Ardeshir, but the main partners were Nusserwanji Tata, Kalyandas, and one Premchand Raychand, then relatively unknown. Their imports from India consisted mainly of cotton and opium, and in return they exported tea, silk goods, camphor, cinnamon, copper, brass and Chinese gold to India. Jamsetji joined his father's kinsman, Hormusji Saklatvala, at Hong Kong, and after a few months accompanied him to Shanghai. Branches were established at both these centres. At Shanghai, apart from a brief spell of soldiering as a volunteer, Jamsetji spent most of his time on a study of the Eastern markets.

On the 20th February, 1859, his sister, Jerbai, was born in Bombay.

In 1837, Queen Victoria was proclaimed "Supreme Lady of the Castle, Town and Island of Bombay and its Dependencies", but this was not accompanied by any improvement in the health and sanitation or in the appearance of the City which continued to be a tangle of mean streets, and congested dwellings. Parts of it were daily visited by the tides which left pools of stagnant water and mud when they receded; corpses were still buried on the Back-Bay shore. Those who lived in the Fort area, a district now resplendent with modern buildings, were exposed to a horrible and unbearable stink. There was absolutely no town planning, no building bye-laws, no proper provision for health or sanitation. Gulleys of filth separated tall houses. Drains were generally choked. This was the condition of Bombay where the Tata family lived and had made their home. However, Jamsetji loved Bombay and, when his time came, did much to improve and beautify the city. In the meantime, he was engaged on his first commercial assignment in the Far East where he spent a year, retaining a share in the Eastern Branch. He brought back with him a few Chinese rickshaw-

pullers who with their rickshaws presented an attractive and engaging spectacle in the streets of Bombay.

There were many subsequent examples of his seeking things in foreign lands and introducing them to India.

While Jamsetji was still away in the Far East, there was a cotton boom in Bombay. Much wealth flowed in, especially in the form of nuggets of gold and bars of silver. The city felt rich. Unfortunately, however, this spell of affluence was mistaken by many for permanent prosperity. The usual channels of investment were soon full. The air now began to thicken with the fog of wild speculation. Many foolish and ill-conceived schemes saw the light of day, and before long fell back into the darkness where they rightly belonged. Premchand Raychand was a king among speculators. The existing banks were naturally conservative and unprepared to meet the new and growing demands of business and industry, so that new monetary institutions were felt to be a necessity. Such institutions would, it was believed, not only advance money for new enterprises, but also be a new and welcome source of investment to the people. The first bank of this kind was the Asiatic Banking Corporation which was established in 1863 with Premchand as its broker. It was sponsored by some of the most eminent men in Bombay and was considered to be an excellent investment. Money flowed in. The shares were quoted at a premium of 65%. The future seemed to sparkle with promise.

Land reclamation schemes had always been thought of in Bombay as a great service to the community and it was perfectly natural, therefore, that such projects should attract the attention of speculators at a time like this. The Back-Bay Reclamation Scheme was the greatest of these. The stretch of land from Colaba Point to Malabar Point across Back-Bay had become a rubbish dump and its reclamation would have improved the amenities of the city beyond

measure. The Government, unable to finance it themselves, gave the scheme their full approval. The arrangement was that the Company would reclaim 1500 acres of land and give 300 of this area to the Government. Reclamation was not easy but the firm started off with a great flourish. Its shares were very much sought after, changed hands frequently, appreciated five-fold and were responsible for a dramatic growth of financial institutions and trading companies of all kinds. Eventually, of course, the bubble burst and many enterprises came crashing down because of the reckless advances made. This meant the failure of the Back-Bay Reclamation Company whose shareholders insisted on winding it up.

Jamsetji's involvement in this was but indirect. He had sensed the disaster that lay ahead, and young though he was, he had had the courage to stand up to his seniors and warn them of the impending dangers. He had advised Premchand to dispose of his shares, but this advice was simply disregarded.

Whilst cotton was still booming, the firm of Nusserwanji and Kalyandas had stationed their agents in various cotton-growing areas and acquired interests in a number of small firms, thus expanding their area of operations. They were shipping large quantities of cotton to Liverpool and needed someone to look after the consignments on arrival at the other end. Premchand had also decided to set up a branch of the Asiatic Banking Corporation in London, Jamsetji was considered most suitable for this assignment and early in 1864, still a young man of twenty-five, he left for England to represent his firm, carrying numerous securities including bills on the China market which were not only negotiable but profitable.

This was not Jamsetji's first long journey. He had, as we have seen, already visited Hong Kong and Shanghai. A sketch

of the conditions of travel that then prevailed may be of interest. Those were the early days of steam navigation which was not yet sophisticated or indeed notable for comfort. Living accommodation for the passengers was not properly protected against the heat of the engine-room. The manual style punkahs which were used to create a draught only served to shift the stuffy hot air to and fro. No ice was carried on board ship, because there was no place to store it in, so that it could not have lasted long in the heat en route. What is worse, in the absence of cold storage, live birds and animals, stacks of hay, fodder and water travelled along with the passengers. Describing his experience, a passenger of this period wrote that "when he woke in the morning to the crowing of cocks, cackling of geese, bleating of sheep and squealing of pigs, he was inclined to think he was asleep and dreaming on an English farm; but the illusion was soon dispelled, because the worst dreams could not conjure up the villainous odour which assailed his nostrils from the nearby pigpens and hen-roosts".

In the circumstances, Jamsetji could not have travelled in comfort nor could he have escaped the noise and stench of the birds and animals, of those alive and of those being slaughtered. But there was one compensation which was perhaps more than ample for him: he had a great weakness for food, and each meal on the P. and O. liner was a rich banquet, to which he must have done full justice.

On his arrival in England after the ardours of the long voyage, Jamsetji could see the signs of the gathering economic storm on the horizon. He had advised the immediate sale of the firm's cotton, but the firm held on hoping for further price increases. It was, however, too late. Shortly after his arrival in England, there was a steep fall in the price of cotton. The precious securities became worthless. The great Premchand's vaulting ambition had overleapt

itself: a dazzling career had almost come to its close.

It was a testing time for Jamsetji. He was young, a stranger in England and the securities he carried were no good to anyone. His firm's reputation was in grave danger. The situation called for a stout heart, resolution, and a resourceful mind. Fortunately, Jamsetji was rich in all these qualities and he explained matters to his creditors and bankers with such ability that they thought that they could do no better than appoint him his own liquidator. It was an experience not without its lessons for Jamsetji. It deepened his awareness of the dangers of excessive speculation and confirmed his belief that caution and prudence were essential to success and happiness. The lessons he learned remained amongst his guiding principles throughout his life.

At the same time Jamsetji had to attend to the disposal of the cotton shipments that were still arriving from India. He was also able to pay frequent visits to Lancashire and to learn, at first hand, of the intricate working of the cotton industry and trade. What he learned during these visits he was later to put to excellent use.

When Jamsetji returned to India, he found his father's business relatively depressed. Nusserwanji Tata was not very greatly involved in the crash which finished off Premchand, but his fortune was, nevertheless, badly bruised. Realistically facing the difficulties which confronted them, he and his son sold their house and other personal property in order to discharge their debts. During the next three years, their business was resolutely rebuilt. They were years of hard, conscientious work by both father and son which helped restore their credit and put them in a position from which they could again fruitfully seize any opportunity that offered.

CHAPTER THREE

BUILDER OF COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY (1867-1870)

THE story told in the preceding chapter of the cotton boom that was accompanied by so much wild speculation in Bombay and which burst like another South Sea Bubble had its roots in the American Civil War. This war broke out in 1861 and the bitter struggle did not end until April 1865. As a result of the conflict, the area under cotton cultivation in the United States fell from some four to five million acres to a mere half million by 1864-65. The supply of American cotton to Britain completely ceased. Prices rocketed in Britain, and India was quick to seize the opportunity this offered.

The total value of cotton exports from Bombay to Britain during the American Civil War reached the unprecedented figure of £ 108,000,000. It was the new wealth flowing into Bombay as a result of this which generated the cotton boom and the general speculation that culminated in the final crash; it was the same wealth that set the stage for the growth of India's cotton textile industry.

The crash that came in 1865 had also resulted in the winding-up of the Eastern Branch of Nusserwanji and Kalyandas. But the connections of the Tata family with the Hong Kong trade were still alive. For Nusserwanji's two brothers-in-law, Dadabhai (grandfather of Mr. J. R. D. Tata, the present head of the House of Tata) who had been chief cashier and accountant in Nusserwanji's Hong Kong venture and Sorabji Tata, had succeeded their father in a small but well-established business and were carrying on

trade between Bombay and the Far East. Although Nusserwanji's firm had been wound up, Dadabhai retained the lease of the premises, and established a firm called D. C. Tata. Sorabji was sending opium from Bombay, and in return Dadabhai was exporting silk from Hong Kong. It was profitable business for the firm.

Nusserwanji knew that the China trade had brought much wealth to many a mercantile house, and it was with reluctance that he had wound up his business in the Far East when the cotton boom had ended. Fortunately, the business in Hong Kong, now run by his two brothers-in-law, was a lucrative one. Nusserwanji decided to launch a new firm under the name of Tata and Company and to expand the business. Assigning a half-share in the business to himself and his son in the latter's name, a quarter share to Dadabhai and Sorabji, and a quarter to another partner, Nusserwanji placed Dadabhai Tata in charge of this new enterprise.

Meanwhile, after a stay of four years in England, Jamsetji Tata returned to Bombay in 1868. Moving from one part of the city to another, he went back eventually to the house in the Fort which the Tata family had first occupied in 1859. Many of the young Parsees whom Jamsetji had regularly met in England returned to Bombay at about the same time. They resumed their acquaintance, and would meet at the bandstand or in the open for an informal chat and would sometimes meet for dinner at a hotel or at the residence of one of them. In course of time, many of the young Parsees of Bombay who were anxious to learn from them and to follow their way of life were attracted into their circle.

Nor was it long before this young and growing group acquired a proper habitation for their activities and it was Jamsetji who conceived the idea of setting up a club with

permanent premises where these young men could meet. Thus was born the Elphinstone Club which later was to play such an important part in the social life of Bombay.

During his stay in England, Jamsetji had paid several visits to Manchester. On one such visit Thomas Carlyle, the famous Scottish author, came to the city and delivered a lecture there. It was at this lecture that Carlyle expounded his famous thesis that "the nation which gains control of iron soon acquires the control of gold". Jamsetji attended this lecture and heard this argument. Young though he was, he was deeply impressed, and years later he was to give a vivid and practical proof of this truth. More immediately, his visits to Manchester stimulated the idea of starting the manufacture of cotton goods in India. He and his associates had obtained contracts from the Army for supplies required by an expeditionary force to Abyssinia. His share of the profits was enough to give him a start. The opportunity came when, at Chinchpokly, a derelict and bankrupt oil mill was put up for sale. Jamsetji decided to buy it, and with his father's approval he formed a private company, consisting of a few friends and one Sheikh Adam, a young, resourceful Borah merchant, whom he had met in Lancashire and with whom he had done some business. This company purchased the Chinchpokly Mill, and re-named it Alexandra Mill in honour of the Princess of Wales. Jamsetji was placed in sole charge. Machinery was installed and the building was rapidly converted into a cotton mill. Under his able management, the mill was able to show a fair profit when he sold it two years later.

CHAPTER FOUR

AS TRAVELLER AND OBSERVER OF LIFE (1871-1874)

As we have seen, Jamsetji Tata had played an active part in founding the Elphinstone Club. In its early years, this Club was located on the third floor of the offices belonging to the firm of Tata in Victoria Buildings. Jamsetji had also joined another club, the Excelsior, but the latter virtually amalgamated itself with the Elphinstone when its members, growing fewer and fewer, began to participate in the Elphinstone's weekly Wednesday dinners. Nusserwanji's old friends, however, continued to meet on Sundays at the Chinchpokly Club. Jamsetji had tried to keep this Club alive by paying a part of the rent. Later, at his instance, the members of this Club also began to hold their Sunday meetings at the Elphinstone, so that there was now one club instead of the previous three. Jamsetji spent his Sunday afternoons there and also attended the weekly dinner regularly. The Club membership grew. At first many young men joined it. Several of the older generation who initially thought that Club life was a waste of time, or that it was an imitation of something Western and therefore alien to Indian culture, were in time converted as they began to realise that the mingling of young and old, and of persons from different walks of life, helped to broaden their minds and to promote mutual understanding and tolerance. Jamsetji's example was contagious. More and more clubs began to spring up, representing different interests and different communities, eventually becoming an established part of the country's life, as they are to this day.

The year 1871 was a year of both joy and sorrow for Jamsetji. It was the year in which his second son Ratanji was born, but it was also the year in which his second child, a daughter, died tragically when she was only ten years old.

In 1872, Nusserwanji revisited Navsari, his birthplace. He had made extensions to his house there and it was now truly palatial, with a suitably majestic exterior. Visitors came from long distances to see it.

In 1873, Jamsetji decided to revisit England in order to deepen his insight into the cotton trade of Lancashire and especially to see the latest machinery that was now in use. Passionately fond of travel as he was, he took the opportunity to make the voyage *via* Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Turkey and Russia. He kept a diary of this visit, but unfortunately only the portion relating to his stay in Palestine and Syria remains. Keen observer that he was, he heard and saw much that was of interest to him.

Jamsetji left Bombay on the 26th April 1873 with a Parsée friend he had met and known in China. It took them a fortnight to reach Suez. They spent a few days in Cairo and Alexandria and then moved northwards, landing at Jaffa. It is at this stage that Jamsetji's diary begins. Here, they stayed at a clean and comfortable but moderately priced hotel where the only other lodger was a Frenchman. Talk turned to business matters and the Frenchman said that he was there on behalf of an English company which was going to build a metre-gauge railway track between Jaffa and Jerusalem at a cost of £6,000 a mile. He added that they were sure of a dividend of 7% to begin with. Jamsetji was sceptical of this figure because of the very limited traffic involved. His diary ironically comments: "I suppose the capital will be most subscribed through personal feelings. Parsons and old maids who found the ride between Jaffa

and Jerusalem like a lion in their path will unloose their purse strings, more especially when the hope of a 7% dividend (to begin with) is dangled before their eyes."

Jamsetji and his companion then set off for Jerusalem. Jamsetji had explained to his friend in advance what kind of trip it was going to be, with arduous and fatiguing journeys on horse-back from day to day. Knowing human nature as he did, he had also told him that "the objects of interest to be seen (were) valued more... on account of their historical and religious association than their own intrinsic merits... but he was fired by a noble ambition to be among the first of his community to visit scenes and places which others more effeminate and ease-loving never thought of doing". He therefore accompanied Jamsetji on this journey but even before the first ten miles were covered, to quote Jamsetji's own words, "he alternately tried riding and walking, half a dozen times expressing supreme disgust at the first taste of Palestine travel. Ideas of returning to Jaffa at once or after visiting Jerusalem began seriously to be mooted, and from that time commenced a series of grumblings and complainings which might try the patience of a saint. Everything was either too hot or too cold, too weak or too strong; the most sparkling, cool and pellucid waters had no taste... Poor Mohammed, the cook, was in despair. Every dish he sent up was criticised. The mutton was overdone and the fowl underdone. One day the rice was too pulpy, and the next too hard and gritty... I was quite in despair and cursed my folly in undertaking to carry round the world the Old Man of the Mountains, until a merciful Providence, as it were, specially intervened to take my load off. At a wayside khan just outside the door as we passed, I noticed a curious-looking oblong box of wood with two poles tied up to its sides as they do to a chair in China. I fortunately inquired of my dragoman the use of

this curious-looking machine. He said it was a chair for carrying ladies on their travels, that it was tied on to two mules, one before and one behind. I opened my eyes, and the thought struck me that this might procure a remedy for all the grievances of my friend."

When Jamsetji told his friend of this solution, the latter who had set his heart on returning said in the words of the Diary, "Having trouble enough from one horse, he had no mind to trust his precious person to two mules." Jamsetji, however, was able to get a promise from him that he would try it on their way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.

Jamsetji was truly fascinated by the journey from the very beginning. Their way, as he records, "lay through magnificent groves of orange, pomegranate, peach, apricot and other trees. The first was loaded with magnificent clusters of golden fruit. . . .The road. . .was lined with a beautiful and variegated carpet of flowers".

Passing the plain of Sharon with its fields of waving corn, they came to Lod, supposedly the birth and burial place of St. George, the Patron Saint of England. They ate their lunch at Ramleh where there seemed once to have been a Christian church. Jamsetji and his companion then reached a place called Bahr-el-evady where they encamped for the night. Deeply interested in horticulture and keenly observant as he was, Jamsetji saw "growing in the cliff of a rock a fig-tree, the circumference of whose stem a few feet above the ground was nearly seven feet. Having seen the fig-tree as a shrub in Bombay, I had always been puzzled why in books it was called a tree. I asked the dragoon if it was not a wild one. He said no, it was the ordinary fig-tree of the country, producing a large black fruit, and my subsequent experience bore this out".

Jamsetji found communication difficult with the German, the Spaniard and the three Syrians who were

present at meal-time. The first two spoke French and no English, while the language of the others was Arabic. Jamsetji records, and this is largely true even today: "I think it is quite necessary for a man who has extensive travels in view to acquire a knowledge of Arabic and French, besides English. The former is spoken throughout Arabia and Egypt, Palestine, Turkey in Europe, Asia, and the Islands of the Levant, while French is understood in almost all countries in Europe."

They left Bahr-el-evady early on the 21st May. They had lunch "near a fine spring of water, cold as ice, and revivifying as the waters of Zem-Zem. Stopped beneath a fig-tree, green and umbrageous, an old woman watching the peach, the apricot, the apple and the vine, which owing to the abundance of water nearby had just then put forth a profusion of green lovely fruit. . . ."

Jamsetji continues: "The old woman had a couple of bright-eyed, intelligent, sturdy little children, who looked after travellers, watered their horses, ran on little errands, and continually dinned *baksheesh* in our ears. We gave the remains of our lunch and a couple of francs to the old woman and some small coins to the children. . . . Our dragoman said she never got such a present as we gave her from any former traveller."

The party reached Jerusalem at 6 p.m. the same day, and stayed at the Mediterranean Hotel. They did much sight-seeing at Jerusalem and saw many holy relics, each with a story generally resting more on tradition and faith than on history or reason.

A diversion was provided when they saw the place where, on the conquest of Jerusalem, the Crusaders were said to have raised up the Cross. But now only the nails used for fixing it had remained in the stone, the Cross itself having been removed. "It was said," Jamsetji wrote,²⁶ "the nails were

making their way through it imperceptibly, and when they had all passed through, the Day of Judgment would arrive. I don't think any of them had progressed on their journey through more than a quarter of an inch, and I thanked God that the Last Day would not interfere with any of my calculations." He could be pungently matter-of-fact.

Jamsetji noticed that while Christian and Mohammedan women wore veils, the Jews, as in Bombay, did not. This was so, he had discovered from his studies, because the Christians had lived here with and under Mohammedans for a long time and had come to adopt the veil from the Mohammedans almost under compulsion in the beginning, retaining it subsequently as a matter of custom; while all the Jews in Jerusalem had come from European countries, bringing with them their European habits.

On Tuesday the 3rd June, they left Jerusalem at 7 a.m. and "were as usual escorted out of the town by a troop of children, among whom we liberally distributed *baksheesh*". Anything curious excited Jamsetji's interest. On their way they found several ichneumons, and they captured two of them. One was dark brown and the other green, spotted with a dirty brown, and they kept them "to note the changes of colour they are sure to display".

Wherever the party went, the entire population, male and female, turned out, some of them lining the road. On one occasion four boys, two on donkeys and two on very good mares, accompanied them for about two miles, serving as a guard of honour. Seeing them passing, a group of reapers in a wheat-field made up a large sheaf of wheat and after chanting a kind of prayer presented it to Jamsetji. The latter was told that he was expected to give them a small present, and he gave them one piastre. This was on their way to Nubataya, where they camped after leaving Jerusalem.

Jamsetji's eye was all-seeing. Referring to the dress of the average woman at Nubataya, he wrote: "They wore wide pyjamas of coloured cloth, with a sort of bodice and petticoat of pretty chintz over it, and a lot of fine muslin over the head. They also wore a sort of veil, but it only covered the underlip and chin. It was wonderful to remark the different ways in different parts of Syria of covering the head. Some had a piece of muslin, mostly white, covering the face from below the bridge of the nose and another reaching from the head to the brows. In Jerusalem, they quite covered the face with fine white or coloured muslin, while the women of Bethlehem, Nazareth and other places had no pretensions to veils, and they were the best-looking females we saw in the country."

On another occasion, passing the village of Banias, Jamsetji noticed two young, good-looking women, amid a generally wretched population, and wrote: "The people, with Nature's bounties in abundance about them, looked a wretched lot, emaciated and begrimed with dirt, the females, even the young ones, looking like ugly hags. But the beauty of one we saw in the house of the Sheikh as we passed made up for the ugliness of the whole lot of them. Two young women came onto the roof of the house to see our cavalcade pass; one was a little over twenty, the other probably seventeen. Both were good-looking, but the latter was surprisingly lovely. As I passed close I made a low salaam; the elder one returned it gracefully, but the younger, like a school girl, taking the end of her veil in her mouth, only tittered and laughed. It would repay the trouble of a visit to Palestine just to obtain such a look as that. Our friend... being in one of his unamiable moods, sat fortified behind his purdahs and lost the pleasure of a sight that would have made him relent into a smile of pleased admiration." Jamsetji certainly admired beauty when he saw it.

Several references in Jamsetji's travel-diary indicate his interest in food. At the hotel in Jaffa where they stayed, "the food was composed of only two or three good plain dishes". At Bahr-el-evady, "as soon as we arrived we had a cup of tea, and at 7 we had a very good dinner, far better than we had calculated upon... Got up early in the morning at 5.30, and had breakfast of tea, eggs, bread and butter and jam, with plenty of milk". At the Mediterranean Hotel in Jerusalem, "the table was very good, everything being prepared in a way to suit a Parsee palate, being a mixture of French and Oriental cookery. We had tea or coffee, bread, butter, honey and eggs..." Referring to their two cooks, of whom one was named Muhammad and the other was from the Deccan, the gourmet in Jamsetji remarked: "... that cook (Muhammad) had a surprise for us nearly every day; he made such nice and savoury dishes as we had seldom tasted even at good hotels on our way, and as for the cook of the Deccan, he deserved to be roasted on his own spit, he was so fat and sleek and sent us in such miserably leathery stuff, that if we had been on shore we might have been tempted to say that it was some old superannuated buffalo that appeared on the table." Obviously, Jamsetji was not devoid of humour.

It is true that the journey undertaken by Jamsetji and his companion lay over some terrible roads and at times it was "more safe and comfortable to keep on horseback, as the animal preserves its footing with admirable poise, choosing a footing from stone to stone with deliberation and judgment". It is also true that Jamsetji had been unfortunate in his choice of a travelling companion, who proved to be selfish, egotistical and complaining, and would swear at him and at the muleteers, the latter returning the compliment with curses in deep and guttural Arabic. But Jamsetji's

appetite for experience was not diminished nor his enjoyment lessened either by the constant grumbles of his companion or by the terrible roads. He eagerly enjoyed meeting different kinds of people and visiting places of historic interest. The colourful panorama delighted him and he found the journey wholly rewarding.

It was unfortunate that his travel-diary only takes us up to his arrival at the gates of Damascus. Jamsetji continued his journey to Russia and then to England, but of the experiences he encountered beyond Damascus there is no record.

In England he re-visited the cotton towns of Lancashire where he had spent so much time as a young man. He saw the technical developments in the textile industry. He saw the cotton of India (which, since the American Civil War, had become such an important raw material for the English mills) being processed, spun and woven. He saw the finished goods being made ready for export to India. No doubt the anomaly struck him. Surely India should process her own raw material so that the Indian consumer did not have to pay for the transport of the raw cotton from India to Lancashire nor for the transport of the finished goods from England back to India.

Filled with these new ideas, Jamsetji returned from England in 1874. His management of the Alexandra Mill had given him first-hand experience of the cotton industry and the profitable sale of the Mill had given him fresh capital for new ventures. He was now ready to follow up his plans and to enter upon a bigger project. He decided to establish a new and up-to-date unit. In his quest for a suitable site for his proposed cotton mill, Jamsetji toured various cotton-growing districts. This meant leaving his family, his home in Churchgate Street and his abundant social activities in Bombay.

Nearly thirty-five years old, of medium height, with a tendency to obesity, calm and dignified, he gave the immediate impression of a man of strength and action. Though at one time, as was then fashionable, he grew side-whiskers, he now wore only a luxuriant moustache which partly hid his rather full lips. He had a well-formed face, regular eyebrows and deep-set, far-seeing eyes. It was the face of a man of vision who could look ahead, plan and act, and give shape to his many and fruitful dreams.

CHAPTER FIVE

A CHAMPION OF SWADESHI (1874-1889)

A MAN of substance and maturity at the age of thirty-five, Jamsetji now devoted himself wholeheartedly to the problems of the textile industry. He brought to bear on these problems everything that he had learnt from his past experiences in India and all that he had learnt on his numerous travels abroad. It is typical of him that he altered the entire basis of his domestic life to match his new ambitions. Since cotton was to be his new venture, Jamsetji decided shortly after his return from England in 1874 to move from Bombay and to take his family to Nagpur, which is situated in a cotton-growing district. There, with the help of his father and a few friends, he promoted a company which was registered in Bombay under the name of the Central India Spinning, Weaving and Manufacturing Company, Limited.

There was a common belief among the cotton manufacturers in Bombay at this time that there could be no suitable location for a cotton mill other than Bombay itself. This doctrine ignored the disadvantage of the city's remoteness from the cotton-growing districts. Following up his father's suggestion, Jamsetji rejected this thinking and decided that the siting of his mills would be determined by three vital and eminently practical considerations: the nearness of the raw material, the proximity of a profitable market and easy availability of coal and water. He travelled much in search of a place that would meet all these requirements and eventually selected a site at Jabalpur. After

careful study he made an application to the Government for the necessary land. But the site was unfortunately a spot where a fakir had set up a shrine which attracted many pilgrims, and it was feared that his eviction might result in stirring up religious feelings. In the circumstances, the Government considered it prudent to refuse Jamsetji's application.

The next site that Jamsetji selected was at Nagpur, about five hundred miles from Bombay. Situated in a cotton-growing district, with the Warora coal mines not far away, and itself the chief market in the area, as well as the terminus of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, this town satisfied all his criteria. There was, however, no population in the area accustomed to factory work. The roads were poor and the bullock-cart the only means of transport. Other industrialists in Bombay scorned Jamsetji's intention to set up a mill in such a backward area in preference to Bombay, the "Cottonopolis" of India. However, with his practical foresight, Jamsetji knew that the advantages of the site outweighed all its shortcomings.

After much careful searching Jamsetji purchased ten acres of land for a very small sum. The site was near the railway station and close to a reservoir called the "Jumma Talao". This had been dug in the eighteenth century and the earth that was then excavated had been dumped at its side, forming large mounds. Jamsetji used this earth to level the area. Many thought that to spend money on the filling up of swamps was a sheer waste. A local banker, whose financial participation in the scheme was sought, refused to become involved. Later, when the scheme had succeeded, he admitted "that Mr. Tata had not put gold into the ground, but had put in earth and had taken out gold".

Nor was Jamsetji thinking merely of cotton at this time. His mind was wide-ranging and could weigh and plan

several major projects simultaneously. While searching for a location for his cotton mills, he was drawn to Jabalpur by the prospect of using the falls of the Narmada river for a water-wheel to drive his mill. With this in mind, he negotiated for the purchase of land but was unsuccessful. In the circumstances, the idea of using water power had to be shelved and another twenty years had to pass before it could be taken up again and given a new and exciting shape. It is, however, worthy of note that when Jamsetji first thought of using the Narmada waterfalls in this way, coal mining was in its early stages in the country, so that in the initial stages there was no choice but to use firewood to supply power, and his idea of a water-mill was eminently sensible.

Work on the new enterprise at Nagpur was now in full swing. On moving into his new home near the mills, Jamsetji reduced his own salary by two-thirds for the shareholders' benefit. He worked tirelessly, devoting his time and attention to supervising the erection and inspection of machines, testing of materials and verification of returns. It was the first cotton mill in this region, and the first in the country to be located away from Bombay and Ahmedabad.

His was the first joint stock company in this area. Jamsetji knew that there were risks in such an experiment. Writing to the Central Provinces Government in 1875, he complained of the high rent that was being charged for the lands leased to the mills, and said: "We pray and trust that we may be dealt with as pioneers in a new line of business which may or may not turn out well."

An administrator must know how to delegate and be able to select the right kind of assistants. Jamsetji had both these gifts. He was in search of someone who had common sense, was honest and intelligent, and could be suitably trained. His choice fell on a young man named Bezonji

Dadabhai, who was a goods superintendent on the Great Indian Peninsula Railway. Though unacquainted with the cotton industry, he had considerable organisational experience. Jamsetji employed him in 1876, trained him for two years, and placed him as manager of his new venture. Later, in order to secure the necessary technical expertise, he recruited an Englishman, James Brooksby. Time more than amply justified these two selections, and Jamsetji always acknowledged the great contribution of these men to the success of the new enterprise.

In the meantime, Tata and Company at Hong Kong had seen varying fortunes. On the death of Dadabhai Tata in 1876, Nusserwanji and Jamsetji withdrew their capital from the Company. Though the Tata family in Bombay was thus no longer represented in China, the Company there still carried on business, though on a restricted scale, with Nathuram and Nusserwanji's brother-in-law Sorabji as partners.

The 1st of January 1877 was a great day at Nagpur. It witnessed the opening of the cotton mill and it was also the day on which Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India. The Mills were, therefore, appropriately and topically named the Empress Mills. But during the rejoicing and the ceremonial of the opening, Jamsetji realised that his troubles were not all over. Anxious to economise on capital expenditure, he had purchased cheap machinery while he was in England. As a result, neither the quality of the yarn nor the level of production was satisfactory. The shares fell to half their value and the outlook was bleak. There was yet a further setback: a fire had devastated the loom-shed. Jamsetji, with his gift of creating opportunities out of difficulties, was to rebuild the loom-shed, re-equipping it with better plant.

In England, his son Dorabji who had now spent two

fruitful years with his tutor in Kent, went up to Cambridge, matriculating at Conville and Caius College in October, 1877.

In 1878, Jamsetji again visited Europe. After spending a few days at the Paris Exhibition, he went to England to purchase plant for his new mills. There he contacted an Englishman, Jeremiah Lyon, whom he had employed earlier to purchase plant and machinery on his behalf. This time Jamsetji was not going to repeat the past mistake of buying cheap machinery. Efficiency was the criterion he sought to satisfy and it paid handsomely, for in 1881 he was able to pay a dividend of 16% to the shareholders. He made it his firm policy to set aside sufficient funds out of the annual profits to offset depreciation, and to provide for repairs and renewals. Thus he was soon able to scrap the original cheap equipment and to replace it with a plant which was a model of excellence. In this respect, Jamsetji started a tradition which has been faithfully followed by his successors in all their various industries.

The year 1878 was of special significance in the history of iron and steel. It saw the discovery of the so-called basic process of eliminating phosphorus from iron. It was a process which revolutionised the steel industry and led to its unprecedented expansion in Europe and America. In India, however, where only small quantities of iron and steel were made, methods of manufacture were to remain primitive for another three decades.

In August 1879 Dorabji was called back from England, as his grandfather Nusserwanji thought that the young man had been away from home long enough. On his return, Dorabji joined St. Xavier's College, Bombay, to continue his education.

At this time Tata and Company at Hong Kong were not doing very well. A former assistant had been appointed as

paid manager and was later made a junior partner, but he proved inadequate to the task. About 1880, Nusserwanji again participated in Tata and Company, but against Jamsetji's advice. Control of a trading organisation from a distant centre is seldom effective. In this case Jamsetji rightly thought that the Hong Kong business was "too remote for efficient supervision".

When, in 1882, Dorabji took his degree at St. Xavier's College, Jamsetji wanted him to start work immediately and not to idle away his time. He attached him to the office of the *Bombay Gazette* for two years to learn something of journalism.

The Empress Mills at Nagpur were now forging ahead. Jamsetji was anxious not only to take advantage of the latest technological advances, but also was always ready to try out any new machinery, to experiment with new ideas. In 1883 his technical expert Brooksby who was at this time on leave in England sent to Nagpur for trial two sample ring frames to be used on cloths of coarser counts. The ring spindle had been invented in America, but the results of trials conducted so far did not warrant its extensive application. Nor had it yet fully passed the experimental stage in Lancashire. Nevertheless, satisfied with the performance of the sample ring frames, Jamsetji immediately ordered some long frames to be sent from Manchester. The manufacturers sent a man named Robert Roscoe, an expert fitter who had an inventive turn of mind and who proved extremely valuable to Jamsetji. Brooksby and Roscoe together were able to bring about substantial improvements in the running of the mills. The output was nearly doubled and the ring spindle gradually supplanted all the mules and throstles. These ring spindles were the first ever in India and are a symbol of Jamsetji's pioneering spirit.

There were many problems at this time connected with

the workers. Attendance was casual and irregular; absenteeism was always high during the marriage season, and at harvesting time even higher. There was little desire amongst the men for regular or permanent employment; they would come and go as they pleased. In order that employees might have decent quarters, the Company leased out land for this purpose. The experiment did not succeed. The men preferred to stay in their own huts in locations of their own choice, amid friends and relations.

But Jamsetji would not be defeated. He had a deep understanding of human nature and was aware of the psychology of labour. He did three things. First, he tried to improve the factory environment in which the men had to work. The Empress Mills were the first in the country to give proper thought to ventilation. Every possible safety precaution was taken, automatic sprinklers were provided, and the men instructed to observe all safety provisions. Second, in order to encourage good attendance, good conduct and good work, attractive prizes were introduced and these were presented at a colourful annual ceremony which furnished a very valuable occasion at which employees of different ranks could meet. Third, a system of retirement benefits in the form of a voluntary provident fund, and a gratuity scheme, the first of its kind in the country's mill history, were introduced. It applied both to officers and rank-and-file workers. The amount of benefit that an employee received was related to the length of his continuous service, as well as to his emoluments; the longer the service an employee had put in, the larger the benefits. A strong incentive to regular and continuous employment was thus created. The Factories Act in Britain which was not introduced until the 1890's was considered in its day enlightened and progressive. But Jamsetji, a quarter of a century earlier, was fixing the terms of employment in his mill even more

generously.

In order to build up an effective force of subordinates, Jamsetji introduced an apprenticeship scheme which young men with certain minimum standards of education could join. They were given practical training from the start and were provided with residential quarters as well as various social amenities. They were also paid a small salary so that they earned as they trained.

The training schemes initiated by Jamsetji Tata have served not only the Empress Mills but also many other cotton mills in the country, where many managerial and other positions have been manned by persons who had received their grounding and acquired their experience at the Empress Mills.

Jamsetji did not believe in what is known as trade secrets. If the sharing of any item of information with others benefited the country, he would freely share it. It was said of him that though ever on the watch to promote the interests of the Company, he was not so narrow-minded as to keep the secrets of his success to himself. He freely imparted them to all—rivals, competitors or others—who went to him for information and advice, his principal aim being to raise the industry of his country generally on to a higher and more prosperous plane. On one occasion, Jamsetji was approached for advice regarding the type of equipment that should be purchased by a rival firm for a mill that they proposed to instal at Nagpur. His advice was so freely and readily given that the rival company doubted its genuineness and thought that there must be a catch in it. Accordingly, they disregarded it and followed their own whim in the purchase of machinery. They discovered later, however, that their suspicion was completely groundless and they would have done far better to follow Jamsetji's advice.

Nusserwanji's Hong Kong business had been languishing

for some time, and in 1883 he decided to retire from it. Both Nathuram and Sorabji died the same year and Dada-bhai's son, Ratanji Tata, assumed charge of the business and put it back on its feet.

Jamsetji was at this time revolving in his mind a plan for the purchase of landed property for residential purposes on a large scale. He did not, however, share his thinking on this subject with any of his friends. In 1883, on Pad-shah's recommendation, he recruited a young graduate A. J. Bilimoria as personal assistant in the firm. Able and trustworthy, he gained Jamsetji's confidence from the beginning, and later proved an extremely competent manager of his property.

Jamsetji's mind was wide-ranging enough to ponder simultaneously schemes of varying magnitudes, both major and minor. For example, aware of the difficulty of water supply on his estates, he sank a well at Navsari around 1883, using equipment which he had imported for the purpose. It was an expensive experiment and not very successful. But he was not a man to give up. A few years later he had three other wells sunk in the district with better results. People in the neighbourhood followed his example, and borrowing his plant which he readily made available to them, they sank wells and received the blessing of water.

Nor must the importance of the Tata family's contribution to club life be underestimated. As we have seen, Jamsetji was one of the original members of the Excelsior and the Elphinstone. He was also a member of the Parsee Gymkhana. These Clubs were non-political. In 1883, he and Pherozeshah Mehta thought of setting up a political club, named after Lord Ripon, then Viceroy, whose progressive measures gave Indians some of their ideas of freedom and aroused opposition from reactionary forces. A bill drafted by Courtenay Ilbert authorising Indian magis-

trates to try Anglo-Indians was introduced, and while it was welcomed by educated Indians, it met with denunciation from most Englishmen in the country. Jamsetji who was never very vociferous in public fully supported the Bill in his own quiet way. He and Pherozeshah Mehta would meet and discuss not only political matters but also family affairs, at least once a week. They thought that if they founded a club where young people could meet, it could serve as a useful forum for political education. But both of them were busy men and did not have time to seek the necessary membership. Jamsetji's son, Dorabji Tata, then connected with the *Bombay Gazette*, had both the leisure and the energy to spare for this purpose. He contacted Government servants, professional men and others and was soon able to collect the signatures of some two hundred people. Being now assured of an adequate membership, the Ripon Club announced its opening in 1883 and soon came to occupy an important place in the social and economic life of the city.

Jamsetji remained a little aloof from the purely political meetings and banquets that were held at the new Club nor would he appear as a speaker on any public platform except occasionally to second a proposal with the briefest of words. But on matters of fundamental importance he took his stand and the National Congress had his fullest support and sympathies. He attended the ceremony of its foundation in 1883 and was a member until his death. He gave freely of his time, energy and resources to the Bombay Presidency Association which was the local medium through which the Congress worked. Speaking at the unveiling of Jamsetji's statue on the 11th April, 1912, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta said: "The current notion that Mr. Tata took no part in public life and did not help and assist in political movements was a great mistake. There was no man who

had stronger notions on political matters, and though he could never be induced to appear and speak on a public platform, the help, the advice, and the co-operation which he gave to political movements never ceased except with his life. And the proof of this statement lay in the fact that Mr. Tata was one of the foundation-members of what might be called the leading political association in the Presidency—the Bombay Presidency Association.”

Jamsetji's interest in politics was not motivated by any desire for public encomium or material gain; it stemmed from a spirit of national service and from sheer patriotism. His contribution to politics and thereby to India's future was solid. Writing about him to his son Dorabji on the 25th June, 1920, Lord George Hamilton said: “It was by solid work such as your father did that India will be brought up to a higher standard of comfort and civilisation, and as that higher standard develops, so will the capacity for self-restraint and self-government increase. I, therefore, look upon your father and the group of men who are following in his footsteps, not merely from the commercial standpoint, but as political pioneers of the most reliable character.”

Jamsetji's patriotism was undiluted by any communal considerations. With him the country always came first. His identification with it was complete and so was his adherence to the Congress as long as its aim was to achieve self-government within the constitutional framework. Years later, in 1899, the Indian National Congress, perhaps remembering his lifetime of support, paid a special tribute to Jamsetji. This took the form of a resolution expressing the appreciation of the Congress for the “patriotic and munificent” support which he had given to scientific education and research in the country.

The Empress Mills at Nagpur had now established themselves. Jamsetji decided to bring his cousin R. D. Tata

and his own elder son Dorabji into the business. Since his cousin, commonly known as "R.D.", had shown great financial competence in managing the Hong Kong House which he had taken over from his father, it must have been no surprise when within five years Jamsetji made him a partner in the Empress Mills at Nagpur. Jamsetji's son Dorabji was now 25 years old and, with his educational background and journalistic experience, he was ready for induction into the world of business, trade and manufacture.

At this time, Jamsetji was thinking of extending his business to Pondicherry on an experimental basis. He had seen some mills in that town, manufacturing a cloth called "guineas" because of its popularity in New Guinea and among other French Colonies in Africa where it was imported free of duty. Its chief attraction was its particular shade of indigo colour which it acquired either from the water of Pondicherry or from some ingredient unknown outside. Even the smell of the dye was distinctive and could be easily detected by an expert.

The French Government sought to transfer the entire dyeing industry to France and induced an Indian expert to conduct an experiment on dyeing in that country. The plan was not, however, successful and the industry was allowed to continue at Pondicherry.

Cautious as he was, Jamsetji obtained samples of the cloth that was so popular in the French colonies. He then went ahead with the manufacture of similar material at the Empress Mills and had it dyed at Pondicherry. The results were satisfactory and the material found a ready sale in the French markets, though not entirely free of duties. Jamsetji's idea was to set up a mill in Pondicherry itself and he deputed his son Dorabji to examine the possibilities of this scheme on the spot. He felt that Dorabji had now

completed his experiment in the *Gazette* office and had been there long enough. There was no particularly interesting work for him in the office and Jamsetji did not wish him to come and take a chair there merely as the master's son. He wanted real help from the young man; the time had come for Dorabji to undertake some serious task. So he sent him to Pondicherry to investigate and study the problem at first hand. Dorabji was authorised to go to the Government, apply for a site and to make enquiries about local labour.

Dorabji readily assumed this new responsibility and proceeded to Pondicherry. From there he forwarded a report regarding local labour conditions and the supplies of cotton, fuel and land. He secured the Government's permission to erect a mill, rented a lovely house, engaged servants and made everything ready to go ahead. But his father called him back. He had abandoned the scheme, as he had enough on his hands and was in need of assistance. On his return to Bombay, Dorabji was sent to the Empress Mills where he was guided in the cotton business by Bezonji Dadabhai.

On the 29th January 1886, Jamsetji's father Nusserwanji who had been spending his later years in the house at Navsari died there at the relatively young age of 64. Earlier, he had purchased some bungalows at Chinchpokli which his son had subsequently taken over. The latter had also bought a house, Bellair, in the neighbourhood along with considerable adjacent property, including certain quarries. Jamsetji and his father had decided to have a permanent home in keeping with their new affluence and on Jamsetji's advice Nusserwanji took a centrally situated plot on the Esplanade in Bombay at a reasonable price (and on a long lease), and there laid the foundations of their new house. But he did not live to see its completion. On his

death his estate at Navsari which now included an extensive acreage of land passed into Jamsetji's hands. He set up a menagerie there with a number of wild animals and converted the surrounding part of his property into a park for the benefit of the public. He also had the house on the Esplanade in Bombay built according to his own general design. His architect was a Mr. Morris whom he instructed to follow the classical style, with large and stately rooms together with a central courtyard roofed over with glass, and surrounded by colonnaded corridors similar to Spanish patios; there was a magnificent marble staircase leading up (and lending an air of appropriate grandeur) to the main part of the building. There was space for the rare and beautiful curios he had collected during his many travels. There was a spacious library where serious literature and fictional works stood neatly arranged on ornate Victorian bookshelves.

Jamsetji's fecund mind was ever thinking of new projects. The success of the Empress Mills had already made him famous. The *Swadeshi* movement was well under way at this time. "Buy Indian" was the slogan of the day. Patriot that he was, Jamsetji appropriately decided that his next enterprise should be linked with this new, nationalist trend. His idea was to set up a mill which would spin finer counts of yarn and weave finer cloths. He was breaking away from the old unenterprising outlook of the Indian mills, which hitherto had traditionally confined themselves to coarse cloths for local use and coarse yarns for export to China. Jamsetji was prepared and indeed eager to compete with British producers who were the main suppliers of finer cloths to India. This new thinking was the genesis of the new mills which he named the *Swadeshi Mills Company, Limited*. The site for the mill was bought at Chinchpokli and preparations were begun for the purchase of

machinery.

But before much progress could be made, Jamsetji found that the Dharamsi Mill at Kurla, some nine miles outside Bombay, was for sale. It was founded in 1860, and had been in liquidation four times, ruining the reputation of its owners. It had thus come to be looked upon as a source of bad luck to anyone who touched it. Undeterred by its ruinous past and confident that he could put it on a sound basis, Jamsetji began to weigh the advantages of buying an existing, well-built mill such as this which stood on freehold land of considerable value. There were already installed 1300 looms, about 100,000 spindles and one of the largest mule-rooms in the world. He called in experts from Nagpur to advise him on the state of the fittings and machinery. There was no unanimity in their findings, but Jamsetji was not deterred by this. Careful though he was, he felt confident that the proposition was a viable one. Backing his own judgment, he went ahead and bought it for about one-sixth of its original cost.

But the reconstruction and modernisation of the mill proved no easy task. Despite his friends' scepticism he was determined to make a success of it. To this end he devoted a colossal amount of time and energy. Tata and Sons became agents of the Company. Jamsetji placed his cousin R.D. in charge of financial management, and appointed Dorabji to learn something of management routine.

The acquisition of landed and residential property had become a part of Jamsetji's financial policy. In fact, building was now a passion with him. On the islands of Mahad, Juhu and Bandra, he bought land and built bungalows; and in Anik, on the island of Salsette, he bought a house, and a whole village, which he held on a privileged tenure, with certain seignorial rights. He had a house at Panch-

gani and a bungalow at Ootacamund.

But from 1887 it was at Esplanade House that Jamsetji's family lived. His wife took little interest in his business; she was a gentle, quiet person, kind to her relations and charitable to the poor. A younger sister of his also lived here, and cousins and nephews enlivened the home. It was a small, closely-knit family that lived under the roof of this beautiful house.

At Nagpur, Dorabji was still receiving his training. When it was found necessary to start a ginning factory in Berar, R. D. Tata and Dorabji were sent to select a site. R.D. chose Yeotmal for this purpose and went back to Bombay, leaving Dorabji behind to acquire experience of this new business. He did not stay long at Nagpur though, as in 1887, Jamsetji had founded a company, called Tata and Sons, with R.D. and his elder son as partners. The latter's training could now be said to have been complete.

About this time in 1887 P. N. Bose, a survey officer, published a report in which he mentioned that the Drug District near Raipur in what was then known as the Central Provinces was rich in iron ore deposits. It was a significant discovery, though many years were to elapse before it led to any tangible results.

At Kurla, much had still to be done. Shortage of labour presented a serious problem. In Bombay, with the many mills that had now sprung up, there were few workers available. Agents were sent out to Broach and Surat to recruit men, but even higher wages and free quarters were not sufficient to induce the workers to stay at Kurla for long. Jamsetji considered various possibilities. The Salvation Army could send some of their reclaimed men, but that would not have been a permanent solution to the problem. In the North-West Frontier Province, wages were low and there was a surplus of labour; but the people there

were not prepared to leave their home State even for the sake of good money. Jamsetji sent a letter to the Lieutenant-Governor at Allahabad, asking the Government to work out a scheme to ensure a regular flow of workers into the towns. He wrote: "Men, women and young persons, who may be willing to move here under certain guarantees, can be well cared for and protected, till by slow training they are able to earn as much as the Bombay operatives." Jamsetji thought that the immigrants would write back to their friends and relations at home, painting a favourable picture of their new life in the towns, and that this would induce others to come, thus ensuring a regular supply of industrial workers from the villages. He also asked the Mill Owners' Association to consider drawing up a scheme to overcome the problem of labour shortage. But nothing substantial came out of his suggestions or representations.

At Kurla, the work of reconstruction was in progress without interfering with production. Some bales were sent to Pondicherry, dyed there and then shipped to Bordeaux to be marketed on the North African coast. Consignments were sent to China and to parts of India. These were the markets upon which Jamsetji had built his hopes. But the quality of the yarn and of the cloth was so poor that hardly anything could be sold at Shanghai and there were continual complaints about quality, not only from China but also from the Indian markets.

When the financial year ended, the Directors had to announce a considerable deficit. The Company had failed to capture the Chinese market. It had failed to pay any dividend to the shareholders. The reputation of Tata slumped and with it slumped the value of the Company's shares to one-quarter of their original price. Bankers and investors alike thought that the end of the Company could not be far off. Many of them sold their shares for what they could

get. The Company was on the very brink of disaster.

The state of the Svadeshi Mills had also been causing him anxiety. It was possible that this anxiety in time affected his health. For during one of his visits to the Empress Mills, he collapsed after feeling faint and dizzy. It was the beginning of an illness which was to keep recurring till the end of his life. Dorabji, who was with him when the attack came, sent for a doctor immediately. The latter came and insisted on his taking a little brandy. Jamsetji was a teetotaler and hated alcohol. But he was not so dogmatic as to be oblivious of its medicinal value in certain circumstances, and he accepted the drink, which revived him. When he was fit enough to be moved, he was taken to Bombay. After a little while he went to England for medical attention. But never again was his health to be fully restored. He was not yet 50 years old, and was to be an ailing man for the rest of his life. But in spite of ill health, his energy and enthusiasm enabled him to fight and overcome all the obstacles that lay ahead.

Jamsetji returned to India as soon as he was well enough to travel. While in England he bought a hansom cab. To see it bowling along the streets of Bombay with a coachman perched high at the back was indeed a novelty for Bombayites.

Jamsetji now turned his attention afresh to the Svadeshi Mills. He had to repair the credit of Tata and Sons and retrieve its sinking reputation. The problems he had to wrestle with and overcome related to finance, administration, machinery and labour.

As regards finance, Jamsetji decided to solve the problem by throwing in his personal resources. With his usual prudence, he had created a large family trust to make generous provision for his descendants. Now, when he asked some of the banks for an overdraft on his personal security,

they refused because the trust money could not be taken into account for this purpose. Jamsetji, allowing nothing to stand in the way of his resolution, immediately cancelled the trust arrangement, and disposed of some of his shares in the Empress Mills, thus releasing the greater part of his resources for the financial rehabilitation of the firm.

Knowing of the risk to which he had put his personal fortune and the sacrifice he had undertaken, and seeing the devotion and enthusiasm with which he worked, Jamsetji's subordinates were inspired to put forth their very best efforts. Alterations and improvements to the Mills proceeded apace. Antiquated or otherwise unsuitable machinery was scrapped. New engines and new boilers were installed. The spinning sheds were improved. Ring spindles replaced the mules and throstles. Ventilation and lighting in the buildings were improved. It was no more a dingy, dark, ramshackle mill. The place was completely transformed and it was now a most modern factory, fitted with the latest equipment.

Jamsetji impressed on all around him that in the conduct of relations between employers and employees, the latter's interest and welfare should be borne fully in mind. Arrangements were made for the filtration of water so as to reduce the chances of disease, for the provision of sanitary huts, for the distribution of fire extinguishers and automatic sprinklers throughout the sheds, and for the opening of a grain depot from which the workers could draw supplies at cost price or even below when conditions of scarcity prevailed. Jamsetji spared no expense and no effort where the well-being of the workers was concerned, thinking not only of the broad problem but of every detail.

Nor was he unmindful of the interests of the supervisory staff. He knew how demoralizing and frustrating it could be, if men lacked opportunities for learning and pro-

motion. He, therefore, introduced an apprenticeship system for graduates, providing them with a library which contained the latest books on the cotton industry.

At home, his family held him in the highest esteem and affection. He was reserved by habit and this naturally somewhat inhibited others from giving a free display to their feelings. But it did not affect their veneration for him and they would freely turn to him for advice or assistance in time of need. He was a friend and partner to his sons as his own father had been to him. He loved his nephews, who reciprocated his affection. He would give them money, and if told that he was spoiling them, he would answer that they must learn the art of spending. Every Sunday, he would have them in his room and ask them how they had fared at school. How they felt about these meetings with him can best be described in the words of one of his nephews, Sir Sorab Saklatvala: "My younger brother Beram and myself invariably went into Mr. Tata's room every Sunday when we would be asked as to how we had fared at school. If the report was favourable we did not mind giving a few details, but if it was otherwise we felt most uncomfortable. But there was some compensation for us boys, as we had lunch with the family, and it was only then that we enjoyed a plate of ice cream which in those days was a rare treat." He adds: "Mr. Tata would return home at 9.30 from his morning drive, and, after his bath, he would talk to us in his room until lunch time."

Jamsetji was neither communicative nor demonstrative with his family. A few conventional expressions of affection and a few brief enquiries about the health of his relations sufficed for him. But the tides of his affections ran deep and strong. His mother and his sisters, his wife and his sons' wives, enjoyed his constant attention. They loved him dearly, but this love was mingled with the awe which a

personality like Jamsetji's could not but inspire. It was, therefore, not without some hesitation outside his library door, nor without some sense of trepidation, that they would decide to walk in and disturb him.

Jamsetji became a father figure to all the members of his large and growing household. He presided over the destiny not only of his sons and his sisters' sons, but also of his sisters. He was more a father than a brother to them. Although the idea of formal education for women was not very widespread, he insisted that they should have educational opportunities of a kind which at that time was usually reserved for boys. All of them learned English and were given the benefit of a liberal education in so far as it was available to women at that time. As his prosperity increased, so did his care of his sisters. To each he gave a share from the proceeds of his ventures, and was tireless in his advice and help to them in the upbringing of their children. For one sister, who suffered from ill-health and whose marriage failed, Jamsetji provided what was possibly the finest room in Esplanade House. This arrangement was honoured until he died.

CHAPTER SIX

A MAN OF WIDE-RANGING INTERESTS (1889-1893)

AT the age of fifty, Jamsetji was working as hard as ever, carefully planning the various ventures which his accumulated finances made possible. His philosophy of practical patriotism meant that he regarded personal wealth as a trust of which the owner was merely a custodian for the nation, and the money which he did not use for industrial experiments he gave freely to education. Undeterred by setbacks, Jamsetji realised that the country would only advance if he and others like him were prepared to take risks and strike out in new directions.

Jamsetji was rarely oppressed by his business activities, nor was he devoid of other interests. He knew the art of leisure and reading was with him a passion. His son Dorabji had been sent to Cambridge for his education; through Dorabji and through his own travels and reading, Jamsetji knew the educational pattern that existed in England and America. Throughout his life, he would devote a part of the day to contemplation and study. Wearing his white suit and black cap, seated among his books, he would dream his dreams and draw up his plans for the country's progress. Aware of the phenomenal progress of science and technology in the West, he was a firm believer in western education and western knowledge, and it seemed to his objective mind that it was the acquisition of such knowledge that could best ensure the country's progress.

At this time Indian universities were merely examining bodies. Jamsetji thought they should teach too, and a

scheme of higher education began to exercise his mind. What precise form it should take had yet to be worked out, but Jamsetji knew that a study of western educational systems would furnish useful guide-lines. For this purpose, a competent lieutenant was necessary. Fortunately, he had one at hand in Burjorji Padshah who had just resigned from the post of Vice-Principal of Sindh College at Karachi. Jamsetji invited him to go round the universities of Europe to consult eminent educationists and to bring back ideas for the type of institution he had in mind.

Jamsetji's representative brought back with him an extensive report on his foreign visits and on his meetings with various educationists, and placed it before Jamsetji. Those whom he consulted seemed to favour the affiliation of his proposed post-graduate institution to one of the existing universities, preferably Bombay. Loving his old University as he did, Jamsetji began to think of the possibility of converting Elphinstone College into a teaching university. But before a decision could be made, the idea had to be fully discussed by all the parties concerned.

In 1890, Jamsetji decided, with his usual foresight, to invest in property on an extensive scale. This he did as a matter of policy. Buying one piece of land after another, he eventually became one of the leading landowners in Bombay. He had great affection for the City and in its development he played a major role throughout the remainder of his life. As generally happens (indeed as it is happening today), it was not long before the property he bought appreciated in value severalfold.

Reorganised and modernised, the Svadeshi Mills had by now turned the corner and were well on the way to prosperity. Their improved products were finding their way into new markets, entering out-of-the-way areas where Tatas had business contacts. Yarns were successfully shipped

to Java, Bushire and Smyrna. Efforts were also made to build up trade first with Aden, then with Athens and Malta, but with little success. In the last case, it was the quarantine regulations that came in the way. More than one effort was made to enter the Egyptian market; but these attempts failed, chiefly because of inefficient agents. However, Jamsetji was not discouraged. He knew that these markets offered rich trade possibilities, and that only patience and perseverance were needed. During his travels in the Middle East, he had seen the quality of the coarse Italian yarn that was exported to Alexandria and sold in Asia Minor, and he decided to export Indian yarns to compete with the Italian. He selected a Muhammedan for his agent, a casual employee of his, and sent him off to Beirut with ten sample bales. He was given three years in which to build up the business. Gradually, the Svadeshi products acquired a name; business expanded and exports increased. How directly success was related to the efficiency of the agents became increasingly apparent. The Mills had established a name for the quality of the goods, and the agents gained a reputation for fair dealing. At this stage, an enterprising Greek offered to handle business on Svadeshi's behalf. Terms were negotiated and settled between the two parties, and the firm of M.P. Nicoladi and Company of Smyrna became agents for Svadeshi products. Assisted by liberal credit, the latter were able to break the virtual monopoly which Austrian and Italian yarns hitherto enjoyed in these markets, and were able eventually to reach even the remoter villages of the Levant.

Jamsetji always believed in experimentation and pioneering. The Empress Mills at Nagpur bore his own personal stamp. He had improved them and extended them, and had given them a standard of efficiency and organisation which made them a model enterprise. The Mills now

occupied a unique position in the country's economy. Jamsetji had resuscitated the Svadeshi Mills, breathing new life into them, nourishing them and building them up step by step. The seemingly dead enterprise which he had jestingly called his "rotten mill" had become flourishing *and rich, with* expanding areas of operation and sales. Jamsetji had originally bought this mill for the spinning of finer counts, and he decided that the time had now come for it to turn to this type of product. Reliance had to be placed on Egyptian cotton, as India did not produce the long staple suitable for this purpose. From 1892 onwards, the mill turned out woven goods of finer quality which met with a ready demand in the country.

All this while Jamsetji was deeply conscious of the deficiencies of higher education in the country, and of their hampering effects on its progress. His idea of a research institution was never out of his mind in spite of his many preoccupations. He knew that the founding of such an institution would take time. But a start had to be made and, in Jamsetji's view, the sooner it was made the better. So he decided in 1892 to introduce a less ambitious scheme, providing for the selection and higher education of a few promising young men from India in England each year. A deed of settlement was drawn up. In order to ensure that individual predilections and prejudices did not govern the choice of scholars, he entrusted the selection to a committee. His main object was to qualify as many Indians as possible for the higher administrative and technical services as well as for the learned professions. Although the expense involved limited the number of students who could benefit under the scheme, the fact is that it has provided a high proportion of leading civil servants, doctors and engineers, both in and outside Government in the country. Jamsetji did not believe in thoughtless alms-giving as such. He preferred more cons-

tructive forms of charity—in this case the provision of educational opportunities for the best and the most deserving. Initially, the scheme had prescribed the proportion of Parsees to non-Parsees, which the selection committee was to observe in the matter of selection. As it was found that in practice such a provision might exclude a more deserving non-Parsee student in favour of a Parsee student, it was removed and the selections were made completely on merit.

At times, charity degrades: it degrades both the giver and the receiver. The giver feels—and this is selfish and de-meaning—that giving will help to open the gates of Heaven to him. The receiver may lose the incentive to work for self-betterment; he may be encouraged in his indolence. Jamsetji, therefore, decided to keep his scheme free from any such risk. The students who were selected were not given any charity. They were given, as a loan, the amount of money that they required for their study, and it carried a nominal rate of interest. The loan had to be repaid in accordance with their emoluments on their return to India. Once a beneficiary had paid off the loan, he could feel the satisfaction that springs from the knowledge that he had discharged his obligations in full measure and had in effect paid for his own education. The funds of the scheme being thus continuously repaid; they were available for the benefit of future students.

In 1892, Esplanade House was *en fête*. The occasion was the marriage of Jamsetji's younger son, Ratanji, to a girl of striking beauty, Navajbai Seth. Jamsetji was delighted to mark the event with the most generous hospitality. He was also fortunate enough to have Ratanji and Navajbai stay with him until the end of his days.

Another project was now revolving in Jamsetji's mind. The Calcutta and Bombay shipyards had in the past turned out sailing vessels that could carry Indian goods. Moreover, Indian frigates like the *Cornwallis* and the *Minden* were

equal to any English ships. But though the nucleus of a merchant fleet existed, not much development had taken place. As a result, India had to depend on foreign steamship companies to carry her cotton goods, yarn and opium to other countries. She thus had to pay the high freight rates which, in the absence of competition, those companies charged. Jamsetji had rebuilt the Svadeshi Mills, so that they could spin finer counts for the Far Eastern markets. But the high freights put up their costs by the time they were delivered, barring or restricting their entry. Not only Svadeshi but also other mills which sought to export their products suffered in the same way. Either their exports or their profits or both were adversely affected. There was no doubt in Jamsetji's mind that India must seek to develop her own mercantile marine if she were to become a great trading nation. He was rich enough at this time not to bother about his personal gains from such a venture. Having given the matter careful thought, he decided to establish his own steamship line and to ply to the Far East.

There were a number of small Indian business houses in China. Many of them had been undercut by the larger Jewish firms who had obtained a secret rebate on freights from the P. and O. Company. Earlier, in co-operation with the Italian Rubbatoio Company and subsequently with the Austrian Lloyd, Jamsetji had fought a war of freights with the P. and O. Company for a year. He was defeated when his two collaborators defected and entered into a pact with the P. and O. Company. Seeing that China and Japan were importing Indian cotton and yarn in increasing volume, the three steamship companies, with the support of their Governments, formed a ring and increased the freight by an astonishing amount.

Jamsetji visited Japan in 1893 and from there he went to Canada, and then to America. There, he visited the

Chicago Exhibition, noting all that he saw and generating new ideas. From there he set off for England. The journey gave him time to think and decide how best he could develop his idea of a steamship line of his own, competing with the larger and well-established lines.

In retrospect, the venture seems to have been more an act of faith than of realistic hope, though the latter was by no means totally absent. Writing to his sons, he said: "I suggest that it be called the Tata Line, so that it may serve as an incentive to our family to make it a permanent one, as far as it may be in our power. Then I am going to supply other chartered steamers with a house flag, which is to be blue ground, with *Humata Hukta* arms, gold circle, human hand with wire and pigeons' wings. . . . This is not only for the good and benefit of our firm or family, but for that of our community, who have lost an old business of theirs: for our mill industry, in which we are so heavily interested, and on which the prosperity of Bombay so depends." The state of his health had deepened his awareness of his advancing years, and he added: "I am an old man now and cannot take any active part in this business, but I will have reason to be proud if the Tata family and its young ones make a name in Bombay by efforts directed towards its prosperity and glory." But age or ill-health could not dampen his enthusiasm or optimism. Proceeding, he said: "I do not mean to retire unless forced by circumstances. I am fairly sanguine of making it a family undertaking, as the more I enter into the question, the more sanguine I feel about the success of the scheme."

With his characteristic thoroughness, Jamsetji went into every relevant detail, examining questions like coal costs, cargoes for the return voyage to India, full utilisation of steamer time and all the other new problems with which he was faced. His idea was that instead of a three-week

service, the number of sailings per year should be guaranteed, and the freight rates should be fixed low enough to be attractive. He urged his sons to ensure a certain minimum amount of business, not only from their own mills, but also from their competitors. The P. and O. Company derived their largest profits from opium, and according to their agreement with the Italian and Austrian Companies, they had the sole right to carry that commodity. Jamsetji, therefore, wrote to his sons, "If we secure anything like a 100,000 bales of cotton, and, say, about 2,000 chests of opium, it will be greatly to the advantage of our trade, to excite our opponents to lower their rates as much as possible."

We have another letter from this period which shows that, though kind by nature, Jamsetji was far from being indulgent. His own standards were high, and he could not always forgive others who, not endowed with his vision or his capacity for industry, failed to measure up to them. Any casualness in business communication irritated him. Thus, while he was on this journey, and when the office in Bombay did not give him an adequate explanation of the existing state of business, he was greatly put out, and wrote to his son: "On the face of your letter, the mess you had evidently made was patent. I do not know how sufficiently to characterise such neglect. ... You say that owing to being constantly disturbed by people at mail time, you could not concentrate your thoughts and write clearly. May I suggest that such matters as these do not require to be referred to only at the last moment, therefore such letters can, without any inconvenience, be written or begun even one or two days before mail day, and any new or important matter added on at the last."

Whilst in France, Jamsetji Tata had made some study of the cultivation of the silk-worm, which was being run as

a cottage industry, and he thought that a similar industry could be set up in some suitable district in India. On his visit to Japan in 1893, he felt confident that India could also establish sericulture, as Japan had done. He knew that the Japanese nation was thorough, and they had absorbed the best that was there in western methods and had made great progress in the care of the soil and intensive cultivation. There was no reason, he thought, why under Japanese instruction the silk industry should not be set up in India for the benefit of the country.

On his return to India, this new field of endeavour began to engage his attention. He chose a site in Mysore with a temperate climate, similar to that in Japan, and a suitable type of silk-worm. What further encouraged Jamsetji was the fact that Mysore once had a thriving silk industry in the distant days of Tipu Sultan, which still existed in a small way in certain villages. Mysore silk had once been famous and had been exported to Europe in the past.

With the help of Sir Seshadri Iyer, the Dewan of Mysore, who knew him and was always glad to listen to his ideas, Jamsetji was able to purchase a suitable site. He endowed a small farm where Indians could study how the mulberry tree grew, how the silk-worm was to be reared, how the diseases that affected it could be treated, how the cocoon should be looked after, how the silk should be reeled, and how it was prepared for the market. The farm was run on Japanese lines. Indian children were trained to resuscitate the ancient industry of their ancestors. Apprentices were engaged for a minimum period of three months, during which they were given free instruction in all aspects of the industry, from the growth of the mulberry tree to the marketing of the final product. Jamsetji's experiment in silk farming proved a success from the start.

In these four years Jamsetji had crowded activities, experiences and efforts that seem almost incredible today. He had conceived the beginning of a major educational institution; he had reorganised the Svadeshi Mills; he had put cotton exports in the Middle East on a business-like foundation, and had simultaneously organised and expanded his other enterprises. This notwithstanding, his questing mind ranged widely over many other diverse problems, from his experiments in cotton-growing to the establishment of a shipping line, and to a scientific organisation of the Mysore silk industry. He was now reaching the zenith of his immense powers.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AN INTREPID FIGHTER: WAR OF FREIGHTS (1894-1895)

IN the two years that followed, Jamsetji gave an outstanding example of the breadth of his interests, the ease with which he could master the most complicated topics and of his tireless vigilance on all matters concerning India's interests.

Jamsetji had no time or taste for professional politics, nor for platform oratory that normally accompanies it; yet when weighty economic issues affecting the country were involved, he threw himself into the discussion, fully armed with facts and figures.

Following a slump in the price of silver, the exchange value of the rupee declined. This prompted the Government to introduce stringent financial legislation, of which Jamsetji said: "It gives with an open hand to those who already have in plenty, and takes away from those who have scarcely anything left to give; in short, whereas the endeavour of the statesman ought to be to redress the balance by making the poor somewhat less poor, the recent action of the Government of India palpably favours the creditor class at the expense of the debtor class. Every debtor in India has now to pay his old debts in an artificially enhanced currency. Not only, for example, is the cultivator compelled to pay the rent of his land to the Government in the appreciated rupee, but the village moneylender, his standing creditor, will also exact from him his old debts with an addition of 12% together with the original heavy rate of interest."

Referring to the increase of India's indebtedness to foreign creditors, Jamsetji wrote:

"All the claims which foreign creditors have upon India must now be paid in the enhanced rupee—such as the Rupee Loan, the Government guarantees to railways, and other public works, as well as loans of imported capital granted by banks and similar institutions to individuals and corporations in India. This increase of indebtedness is in the nature of a clear loss to India. The loss has been caused to the country by its own legislation, and there is no gain whatever to counteract it."

Jamsetji had great sympathy for the chronically poor agricultural worker, and in his criticism of the new legislation he fully remembered their interests. He wrote: "The Government's measures have really imposed an additional tax on the poor *raiya*t whom everybody admitted to be over-taxed already. . . . By a stroke of the pen the *raiya*t's liability to his creditor is now increased by more than 12½%."

Though rich himself, he never thought in terms of the interests of his own class, nor did class considerations ever dilute his sense of social justice. If the new measure cheapened imports, the benefit went to the rich and not to the *raiya*t. "The latter's food is from the fields. His clothing, where it is not homespun, is the product of Indian mills. His luxuries are native liquor and tobacco. . . . The Indian cultivator, therefore, gains nothing from higher exchange to compensate him for loss through depreciation in the value of his produce." Jamsetji continues: "It is the wealthy Indian who has derived advantage from the artificial cheapening of all articles imported from Europe and all gold-using countries. Nearly all cotton, silk and woollen goods, metals and articles of luxury, wine, spirits, tea, coffee, sugar and a thousand other things will be cheaper to him.

... All the property that he holds in land, houses, gold and jewels has appreciated to the same extent."

Predictably, Jamsetji's remarks did not pass unnoticed. *The Times of India*, for example, attacked him in its editorial columns. It admitted (and in this, opinion was completely unanimous) that "Mr. Tata's contributions always command a respectful hearing, apart from their intrinsic merit, for the respect with which he is regarded by the Europeans, and the esteem in which he is held by his own countrymen". But, the *Times* remarked, "We have hitherto thought Mr. Tata secure from the temptation of addressing the native gallery, which is always as well pleased at any depreciation of the merits of the Indian Civil Service, as it is effusive of applause to those who tell it, how equally well, if not better, the same service could have been performed by the educated natives." But Jamsetji never meant to deprecate or underrate the merits of the Service; he had the highest regard for its competence. Besides, like other nationalists of his time, he believed in the attainment of self-government through constitutional means and within the framework of the Empire. It will be recalled that it was by no means infrequently that, at the annual session of the Congress, the presidential chair was taken by an Englishman. Lest there be any misunderstanding with regard to his views on the Civil Service, Jamsetji wrote off promptly in reply that "I am behind no man in appreciating to the full the splendid services its members have, from time to time, done to this country. But one need not, therefore, be blind to its defects, nor rest satisfied with the blissful impression that it is the best of all blessings."

Clarifying the attitude of the Parsee community, he said in the same letter that "our small community is, to my thinking, peculiarly suited as interpreters and intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled in this country.

Through their peculiar position they have benefited more than any other class by English rule, and I am sure their gratitude to that rule is, as it ought to be, in due proportion to the advantage derived from it. At the same time it must not be forgotten that as much is due from them to the people of this country which gave them shelter for centuries before the commencement of the British rule. Now it is acknowledged on all hands, and by the Parsees themselves most of all, that any change in the rulers of this country is sure to affect most seriously the welfare and prosperity of their community. Many even believe emigration a possible contingency. Our stake in the country, in proportion to our number, is rather large, and we are very much alive, though it may be from selfishness, to any serious risks incurred by our Government through the wanton and selfish behaviour of some part or portion of the community ruling over us. British rule in the abstract is nearly as good as it can be in India, and nobody dare cavil at that. But abstract intentions are one thing and serious performances quite another. As regards the latter, then, do you mean seriously to contend that it is not the duty of every citizen, even including yourself, to see that everywhere the performances are up to the promise? Pure natives of this country, whenever they venture to criticise the actions of individuals in authority, are liable to have their motives questioned; but in the case of Parsees such doubtful motives must be regarded as non-existent."

The position of the Parsees in the country has often been misunderstood. It is true that they first had their roots in Persia, but they have dwelt in India for twelve centuries or more. Their features and complexion may still be distinguished from those of other Indians generally, but instances are not wanting, particularly in the South, where it is difficult to tell from a person's complexion or even from

his features whether he is a Parsee or a member of some other Indian community. Their religious rites and prayers are still performed in Pehlavi, but this is no longer the language of Persia, and the proportion of Parsees familiar with modern Persian has gradually diminished over the decades. The Parsees today, like the Muslims or the Christians or the Sikhs, are a separate but essentially an Indian community; because of their education and social environment, they are perhaps more western in their ways and habits than others. It is because of the latter distinction (which was more marked in 1894, when Jamsetji wrote his letter to *The Times of India*) that the Parsee community was, according to Jamsetji, "peculiarly suited as interpreters and intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled". But with the birth of the Congress in 1883, a new sense of nationalism had begun to dawn. The various communities felt that, though distinct, they must fit into the national mosaic both in their own interests and in the larger interests of the country. Nor did the Parsee community lag behind in this national upsurge. As stated earlier, Jamsetji himself was present at the birth of the Congress, and always considered himself an Indian first and last.

In conformity with British free trade principles, India had finally abolished all import duties in the early 80's, except on liquor and salt, which were subject to an internal excise duty. In 1894, however, owing to the continuing financial stress, which the closure of the mints in 1893 had not relieved, the Government was impelled to propose the imposition of a general 5% tariff on all imports, but the Secretary of State struck out cotton yarn and cotton fabrics from the list. The new duties yielded very little so that additional measures were necessary to ease the situation. The Secretary of State insisted that if cotton yarns and piece-goods were to be subject to the tariff, a countervailing excise duty

on cotton goods made in the country should be concurrently imposed. Eventually, in 1895, import duties were levied at 5% on all cotton piece-goods and cotton yarn above 20's accompanied by a 3½% excise duty.

There were strong protests against the excise duty in the Imperial Legislative Council and in the country at large. It was openly stated that the duty had been levied in order to protect the Lancashire cotton interests. An Indian member of the Legislative Council said: "So long as Lancashire sends 60 members to Westminster, the British Government will always have 60 reasons for maintaining the excise duty."¹ What added to the bitterness of feeling on the subject was the fact that very little of the Indian mill products was in fact in competition with Manchester goods for, as was admitted by the Finance Member, Westland, "Of the cotton manufactures of India, quite 94% is absolutely outside the range of any competition with Manchester, being the coarser quality of goods (24's and under) which Manchester cannot pretend to supply so cheaply as India;" and, "Manchester has an absolute monopoly to the finer qualities of goods;" and that "goods of counts 26 and over, India can produce under difficulties and in small quantities."² So it appeared to the critics that even 6% of imports from Manchester could not be left exposed to competition from the Indian mill products.

The cry of *Swadeshi* was common at this time, and as Lala Lajpat Rai himself affirmed, *Swadeshi* and the boycott of English-made goods were "one and the same thing", and both meant protection. It was protection that Nationalist India stood for. The excise duty on cotton violated this principle and ran contrary to the country's interests.

¹Sir Valentine Chirol, *Indian Unrest*, page 277,

²Thomas, *The Growth of Federal Finance in India*, page 247

Like all nationalists, Jamsetji stood for protection. He had, however, been prevailed upon to support the revival of a general tariff on an assurance given to him in private that the import duty on cotton goods would not be accompanied by a corresponding countervailing duty on indigenous manufactures. He accepted this assurance in good faith though, being a private one, it had no more than moral force. When it was broken, Jamsetji was a very angry man. He attacked the "false Imperialism" which considered only the Englishman, and not the Empire. But to act in a hurry or to launch a sentimental appeal for the abolition of the excise was not Jamsetji's method of work. It was the economic aspect of such problems that interested him. Opposition, if it was to be effective, had to be systematic. He, therefore, decided to collect all relevant economic statistics regarding the cotton industry, which he felt would be helpful to others in pressing for the repeal of the excise. He wrote a circular letter to various millowners, and deputed his assistant to prepare a report on the subject. Jamsetji had this report printed at his own expense, forwarded it to the millowners, and then placed it before the public. The report unequivocally refuted the general impression that the industry was making abnormally high profits. To the English argument that the duty was "only a small one", the report furnished a convincing reply by showing statistically that a $3\frac{1}{2}\%$ excise duty on cotton cloth was equivalent to a 7% duty on capital sunk in weaving under Indian conditions.

Jamsetji knew that India's finances needed resuscitation. It was for this reason that he had supported the revival of a general tariff on imports. He suggested a graduated income-tax and said: "I should not hesitate to recommend even 20% on incomes in the top bracket." This percentage may seem very small to us today, when direct taxes sweep

away almost the entire income above a certain level. It must, however, be remembered that until 1886, when an Income-Tax Bill was passed by the Legislative Council, the official and professional classes were almost exempt from all direct taxation, and the Viceroy himself admitted that "there is not one of us who pays any really serious sum from his income into the Imperial Exchequer". In comparison with what then prevailed, Jamsetji's suggestion was novel; it was progressive and extremely radical.

By now, the idea of a shipping line had become a reality. There were two ships of the Tata Line (the *Annie Barrow* and the *Lindisfarne*) and two Japanese vessels to form the nucleus of the fleet he envisaged. Each vessel was to sail once a month and to carry coal, glass, lamps and other articles from Japan and take cotton goods and yarn on the return journey to that country. The Press praised Tatas for this bold venture, which, it was thought, would break the monopoly of the P. and O. Company. The new line charged less than two-thirds of the figure charged by the P. and O. The rates for cotton, yarn and opium were also drastically reduced. Then followed what Jamsetji called the "war of freights". The P. and O. and its associates slashed their rates and made, in the words of Jamsetji, "the unusual offer of carrying cotton to Japan free of charge". These concessions were available as a rebate, and only if the shipper gave a written declaration that he had not had any dealings with the Tata Line or with the Nippon Yusen Kaisha for the purpose of any carriage between Japan, China and Bombay. It was also put out privately that the *Lindisfarne*, which was a perfectly good vessel chartered from an English firm, was unfit to carry cotton. This was done in order to make it difficult for the new Company to take out a marine insurance cover for their vessels.

The methods adopted by the P. and O. and its colleagues were obviously unfair and they very naturally exasperated Jamsetji Tata, who had personally backed the new enterprise, and was spending thousands each month to keep it afloat. He sent off a petition to the Secretary of State for India and also issued a pamphlet called *The War of Freights*. He said that "our new steamship service is a distinct effort in the direction desired by the Government of this country", and that it was being strangled at its inception. What was more than surprising was the P. and O.'s complaint that "a native line of steamers was combining with the Japanese cotton millers to boycott British steamers to the great detriment of British trade" and requesting Her Majesty's Government to move the Japanese Government to interpose. Not without bitterness, Jamsetji wrote: "With scores of liners, English and foreign, plying in these waters which our petted and much glorified Anglo-Indian Company can afford, and perhaps find it good policy to tolerate, it is only jealous of a small enterprise like ours, and while it can lovingly take foreigners and possible future enemies of England to its bosom, it discards the poor Indian for whose special benefit it professes to have come to India, and from whose pocket it draws the greater part of its subsidy."

Jamsetji Tata protested chiefly against "the means, hardly fair, which have from time to time been used to put us out of the way". The reductions in rates were completely uneconomic, reaching "an unremunerative and ruinous level". Nor were the tactics of the P. and O. Company new. In the past they had slashed their rates in order to stifle their rivals, and once the latter were out, they would raise the rates "as high as before, or higher, by way of punishing temporary deserters to the rival line".

The reaction of the British Government to Jamsetji Tata's pamphlet, *The War of Freights*, was far from satisfactory. He was represented as trying to set up a monopoly to exclude everybody else from any share in the shipment of Indian cotton and opium to Japan.

In his petition to the Secretary of State for India, Jamsetji referred to the P. and O. Company and said, "This Company, to whose prosperity the tax-payers of India may lay some claim to have contributed, has driven off all legitimate competition from time to time, either by reducing rates to so low a limit as to exhaust the resources of its rivals, or, failing in that respect, taking such powerful rivals into partnership." The Indian shippers, who had suffered from this inescapable tyranny in the past, "have now, however, been enabled to start a movement in the success of which they entertain every hope". He pointed out the unreasonable rates that the P. and O. charged, and the rebates they granted to favoured firms, and, knowing that legal pressure was outside the Government's competence, he suggested that the Secretary of State should use moral pressure on the P. and O. Company, so as to protect the interests of the Tata Line. But neither in this case nor on the P. and O.'s complaint mentioned earlier did the Government agree to interpose, as in its view, both cases were private matters.

In accordance with their agreement, the Japanese Cotton Buyers Association used Jamsetji's steamers for their cotton shipments. The cotton manufacturers of Bombay, however, let him down by cancelling their contracts with him. Anonymous letters in the local press, ignoring or casting doubts upon his patriotism, represented him as a self-seeker out for personal profit. The venture had cost Jamsetji a great deal of his own money, and he had now no option but to wind up the shipping line. He had meantime

forced the insurance agents to take back what they had said about the state of the *Lindisfarne*, but that was small comfort in the circumstances. There was little point in continuing to add to his losses. The two chartered vessels were returned to England and the Tata Shipping Line came to an end. But this does not detract from the merit of Jamsetji's scheme nor from the validity of his vision. When we remember that today India has a large and growing merchant navy, we know that Jamsetji was on the right track. If he failed, it was a courageous failure upon which the future could be built. It is also interesting to recall that it was left to his successor, Mr. J. R. D. Tata, half a century later, to found a successful Tata Line, which, at that time, of course, had to be an air line. Air-India, in modern times, grew out of the same kind of vision.

What Jamsetji failed to do for India, he succeeded, albeit indirectly, in doing for Japan. The Nippon Yusen Kaisha built up a profitable shipping line and their Directors admitted later that their success was "largely due to his earnest and energetic efforts". In spite of their attacks, the P. and O. Company held him in great esteem. One of their Directors wrote: "We had some passages-at-arms with him in bygone days, which added interest to the everyday routine work of agency life. The old man died before some of his greater dreams were fulfilled, and his descendants will reap the benefit of his foresight."

Again we are overwhelmed by the enormous energy of the man. The enthusiasm with which he threw himself into the currency and cotton excise controversies at a time when he was busy with the detailed work for the shipping lines is typical of his extraordinary capacity for dealing simultaneously and effectively with many problems.

CHAPTER EIGHT

AN EXPERIMENTER IN COTTON-GROWING (1896-1898)

IN 1896 the bubonic plague broke out in Bombay, and for three long years the city suffered its dreadful scourge. In nine cases out of ten, the disease proved fatal and the death roll was appalling. It was a testing time for the city and for the resourcefulness and resolution of its inhabitants.

The outbreak led to the closing down of many of the mills in the city. The Tata family was reunited again at Navsari for Christmas. The Tata week used to be a week of festivities, with picnics and treats for the children of the Tata Schools. When it came to a close, Dorabji decided to return to Bombay; the plague did not deter him. He said: "If I remain here, what is to become of the office and the mill?" His return had a salutary effect. Seeing him at his post, the clerical and other staff were encouraged to follow his example and the mill continued to operate. It was restricted working though, and the men were paid more wages for shorter hours.

The possibility of cultivating in India a cotton of suitable staple for the spinning of finer counts was now engaging the attention of Jamsetji Tata. The Government of India had conducted certain experiments, embodying the results in their reports, which were far from encouraging. Jamsetji had been studying this subject for years, reading pamphlets and consulting experts, and he was not satisfied with the experiments conducted by the Government. He published a comprehensive memorandum in 1896 on the growth of Egyptian cotton in India in which he said, "any experi-

ments that have been tried have not been under suitable conditions". Reviewing the Indian cotton industry and seeing that the "infant prodigy, Japan", posed a serious competitive threat in China, while Germany, Austria, Belgium and England were exporting masses of manufactured goods to India, Jamsetji asked his compatriots to consider how best India's "young and only industry" could be protected from annihilation. The solution was to grow Egyptian cotton. He said, "If India were enabled to grow for herself the long-stapled varieties, she would derive immense benefit in three different directions: such an expansion would assist agriculture, conserve the money of the country, and improve the exchange." Being above all a realist, he knew that this would take time and so he added: "All this is not to be attained in a year or even half a dozen years; but if the cultivation of Egyptian cotton proves at all feasible, it may be the means of solving one of the greatest problems of the generation."

The Government had made some desultory attempts to stimulate the cultivation of cotton, but without success. Jamsetji had faith in the people and he called upon the educated class to experiment with cotton cultivation. He said: "I believe that every professional man in India, whether in active business or retired, has some interest in land and nothing can be easier than for anybody to try my proposed experiment on half an acre or so under his immediate supervision." As a direct stimulus, he offered to purchase all good cotton at a fair price and bear himself any loss that any grower might incur on this experiment.

It was, however, not an easy venture. The average yield of clean cotton in India was less than thirty pounds per acre, and the best yield below one hundred pounds, against the average yield of six hundred in Egypt. But Jamsetji knew his country. He said: "In this vast continent of

ours, we have such varieties of climates and soils that it would not be hard to be able to find all that we want in some parts of the Empire." He had studied the conditions in Egypt and he knew that Sind with its Indus corresponded to Egypt with its Nile; climatically, the period from October to May in India corresponded with that from March to October in Egypt, which was the time when their crop was sown and harvested. The experiments in India had failed hitherto, Jamsetji felt, as the sowing time selected was wrong, and this was the first thing that must be put right. He wrote: "As the cost does not promise to be ruinous, I believe it to be my duty, and the duty of every well-to-do native of this country, to lend a helping hand towards making a final trial of this most important experiment."

In response to his appeal, some half a dozen friends promised to experiment with cotton-growing on plots of one acre each. Irrigation was going to be a problem. Reliance had to be placed on the usual well, the leathern bucket and the bullock. Jamsetji explained the Egyptian methods of cultivation and gave detailed instructions regarding the proper sowing time, manuring, watering, planting, etc., and requested the growers to send him full reports on their experiments, and also to feel free to ask for additional information or to offer comments and suggestions. His observations, as he said, were meant for all his countrymen interested in the country's economic progress, "and the well-being of its labouring poor". Never did he forget the underprivileged.

The experiments, however, were not very successful. Jamsetji's helpers were all amateurs. Their approach to the experiment was unscientific. They used the old primitive methods, did not know how to prepare the soil properly, how to tend the plants or protect them against cold and drought. Nature also worked against them. The period of

experimentation had been a period of irregular rainfall. To Jamsetji, the results were very disappointing. Moreover, he found that, in submitting their reports, his friends had not even bothered to fill in the forms he had sent them. After a careful scrutiny of the reports, he issued another memorandum, pointing out the various mistakes that had been made in the initial experiments, and indicated that the results would not have been so bad if his instructions had been faithfully carried out.

Yet in spite of all its difficulties, the experiment had been worthwhile. To continue the cultivation of Egyptian cotton in the Central Provinces seemed to be warranted.

Jamsetji's experiment aroused much public interest; it also acted as a stimulus to the Government. The latter experimented with American cotton, and also with hybridisation, believing it easier to improve indigenous cotton than to achieve success with exotic strains. For two consecutive years, the Government submitted samples to Jamsetji and his experts for valuation and for an indication of the counts for which they could be suitably used. The American cotton showed some success at times, but the Egyptian cotton did not. The indigenous variety, however, showed a distinct improvement. But it was the Egyptian cotton that Jamsetji wanted to cultivate and it was on this cotton that he had experimented and on which he had spent so much money. If he had lived longer than he did, he might have continued his experiments on cotton-growing. But he had only a few years left, and these were to be amongst his most crowded years.

Jamsetji turned his attention to the city of Bombay once again, and decided to construct flats, particularly suitable for Europeans. The houses in which they had to live were generally badly ventilated, stuffy and hot, with inadequate sanitary and domestic facilities. Servants slept on the

corridors or landings. Those who could not afford a fairly long visit to the hills found living in these houses extremely trying, if not positively detrimental to their health. Jamsetji called in his own architect to put up a four-storey block of sixteen flats on an open site near Esplanade House.

In Bombay itself, there was no hotel worthy of the city. Jamsetji thought of building one. For this purpose, he took on a lease a large plot of land on the Apollo Bunder that was to be reclaimed by the Port Trust. Jamsetji, however, had no experience of hotel management, nor did he have an inclination for it. He had not worked out the cost of the building or the equipment required, nor did he know what the income or the expenditure was likely to be. But as he believed that the installation of an up-to-date hotel in Bombay was one of the essential conditions of the city's advancement, and one that no other industrialist was likely to venture upon, he considered it his duty to fulfil the need. He, therefore, decided to go ahead with the project.

Every now and then, Jamsetji's restless brain would think up something new and entirely different from what he had been working on. This time, he thought of coffee and strawberries. His nephew, Sir Sorab Saklawala, records: "I remember later on when I was studying for my B.A. examination at Panchgani where my mother was staying, Mr. Tata, on his way to Bangalore, had come up there. He went to Bhilad, a few miles away, where there was a small coffee plantation. He bought up acres and acres of land and appointed an agent to develop a coffee plantation." Referring to Jamsetji's interest in strawberries, his nephew writes: "As we know, at Panchgani as well as Mahableshwar, strawberries are grown in abundance. He (Jamsetji) thought there was great scope of increasing the crop and I remember his saying that when he returned from his trip to England he would consider the question of taking up

the Panchgani plateau where a jam factory could be built and strawberries grown on the slopes of the plateau." Very few industrialists anywhere, at any time, have fully realised the importance of agriculture or horticulture or have taken the practical interest in it that Jamsetji did.

In 1897, a man named Robert Miller of a Bombay mercantile firm secured the option of buying the rights over the Doodh-Sagar Falls in Portuguese territory. He came to Jamsetji for advice, and the latter suggested the employment of David Gostling, a well-known engineer, to report on the commercial possibilities of the use of water power from the Falls. The report was favourable; Jamsetji, along with Miller and Gostling, decided to promote a small syndicate. In the meantime, however, Gostling came up with another scheme. He had come to the view that the storage of rain at Lonavla, of which there was no dearth during the monsoons, in what could be made an excellent catchment area, could be used for the generation of a large portion of the electricity required for factory purposes in Bombay. As soon as the new scheme was explained to Jamsetji, he realised its potentialities. It was upon this scheme that they now began to concentrate, casting aside the earlier scheme for the time being.

In 1897, a Russian doctor, Professor Haffkine, introduced inoculation against the bubonic plague, but it met with jealousy from doctors, both Indian and English, and with superstition and mistrust, generally. Stories went round that leprosy and small-pox had resulted from the serum. But Jamsetji, whose knowledge was practically encyclopaedic, and who was always ready to devote himself to the thorough study of any current problem, was not to be fooled. He did whatever was possible to fight this disease in the interest of the community's well-being. He went through every piece of literature he could find on the subject in order to

familiarize himself with the history and treatment of different kinds of plague and find the best methods of preventing the spread of infection. He was quick to see the value of Haffkine's discovery. Jamsetji underwent inoculation himself and ensured that all his servants did likewise; he instituted an enquiry into the effects of the serum among his co-religionists and preached the advantages of inoculation amongst all and sundry. His son, Dorabji, was about to get married at this time. Ten days before the event, the latter's prospective father-in-law, Colonel H. J. Bhabha, arrived in Bombay. He called on Jamsetji one morning, and saw the doctor engaged with the domestic staff. Jamsetji insisted that Colonel Bhabha should be inoculated first, and in spite of his reluctance Jamsetji was able to prevail upon him to do so.

Meanwhile, another of Jamsetji's plans was being developed. He had, as we have seen, conceived the idea that Bombay, as a great trading centre, should have a modern hotel. In 1898 he bought some land on a 99-year lease, renewable at his option for another 99 years. Upon this site were laid the foundations of a new and modern hotel, the first of its kind in India, the Taj, which stands to this day.

The Advance Mills at Ahmedabad were now presenting problems. Not only was the management bad, but the directors, agents and shareholders pursued a divided policy. Bankruptcy appeared to loom ahead. In his own interests as well as in those of the Company itself, and to the annoyance of the agents, Jamsetji foreclosed. Suits and counter-suits followed, and eventually Jamsetji bought the Mills. The condition of the mills was much worse than he had feared. But he was not to be defeated. The work of alteration and renovation was immediately taken in hand. As in the case of Svadeshi, so in the case of the Advance Mills, he brought his best men from Nagpur, and incurred

much labour and expenditure; and he was at last able to transform the Mills into something modern and progressive.

Hitherto, according to common practice, the agents had received a regular and generous commission, regardless of whether the managed companies operated at a profit or a loss during the year. This, to Jamsetji, seemed a "pernicious system". Jamsetji decided to abolish it and, in his contract with Svadeshi, he provided for the payment to his firm of a commission of 10% on the actual profits made.

About 1898, Jamsetji Tata's second sister, Jerbai, now Mrs. Saklatvala, had joined the family at Esplanade House. On the 14th February, 1898 his eldest son Dorabji had married Meherbai Bhabha, daughter of a well-known educationist in the service of the Mysore Government. She was of stately bearing, rich in culture and refinement, passionately fond of outdoor sport in general and of tennis in particular. "She was", it was said, "a woman's woman", and did much for the education and the advancement of Indian women. She and Dorabji were a very devoted couple, so much so that the Marchioness of Aberdeen thought it fit to compare Dorabji's devotion to Meherbai with that of the builder of the Taj Mahal to his wife. After their marriage, he set up home on Malabar Hill.

CHAPTER NINE

AN EDUCATOR WITH A VISION (1898-1899)

AT last Jamsetji was able to move forward with his plans for his educational institute. In September 1898, he announced to the public his long-considered scheme for post-graduate instruction in higher scientific and technical branches of learning, and also his offer of a property in trust as part endowment of a Research Institute. This magnificent offer met with a truly heartening response throughout the country. The Press was full of it, and it served to contrast this practical form of charity with the many useless memorials that had been constructed.

Jamsetji's scheme provided for a Research Institute or a Teaching University for India, imparting instruction to post-graduate students on the principles of German Seminars, French Conferences and English and American Research Classes. Its primary aim was to teach, not to examine. The specialist courses were to be professional and technical, rather than simply liberal. A school of sanitary science and practice for qualified medical men, a school of pedagogics for future secondary teachers and a school for higher technical studies were to be set up, not necessarily together, but over a period of time. The satisfactory completion of each recognised course would lead to the award of a diploma.

Jamsetji remembered the ascetic spirit for which India was so well known. Accordingly he believed that the construction of residential halls of learning, monastic in spirit, would be appropriate. This would benefit not only the cause of learning, but also the pursuit of asceticism itself.

The research scheme was necessarily complex, involving among other requirements the construction of libraries, laboratories and museums. It was bound to entail heavy expenditure, both capital and recurring, and in order to attract the necessary financial support a provisional committee of twenty-three members, mostly Indians, was constituted. Curiously enough, Jamsetji Tata, in spite of being the founder of the Institute and in spite of his magnificent offer, figured not prominently, nor with any distinction, but like an ordinary member, as twelfth on the list. Procedure and placings in such cases meant nothing to Jamsetji.

On the 13th December, 1898, the Provisional Committee submitted a scheme of studies and also a draft Bill for what it decided to call the Imperial University of India. The name "Imperial" was chosen from no idle love of the grandiose. We must remember that at that time the official name of the country was the Empire of India. The name "Imperial" merely meant therefore that the Institute was conceived as a national body serving the whole of the country. The University structure was to consist of a Senate, chiefly of non-experts, entrusted with duties of administration, finance and general government; a Professorial Council to perform the most important duties of a *Senatus Academicus*; and a Guild of Graduates with representation on the Senate and on the Professional Council.

Considerable thought was given to the provision of suitable machinery for the election of teachers. It was realised that for some time to come the faculty in India would be too small and perhaps not sufficiently experienced to judge of real merit in a great variety of subjects or to select suitable candidates, particularly from among those abroad. It was therefore provided that, while the subordinate appointments on the teaching staff would be made by the

Professorial Council, subject to confirmation by the Senate, for every appointment of a professor in any branch of learning for which a chair existed or was created, *the Senate would* nominate a committee in London of not less than three persons, two of whom, at least, would be experts in that particular branch of learning.

The powers of the University were made wide and general, as the scheme was "in the nature of an experiment in India", and it was not known what changes would be necessary in the light of subsequent experience. The scheme of studies was very much a forward-looking one. It provided, in accordance with Jamsetji's thinking, for three departments: scientific and technical; medical; philosophical and educational.

Though the Institute would provide a high standard of instruction in a wide range of subjects, it was not Jamsetji's intention that Indian post-graduate students should be denied all opportunities of education abroad. His own foreign travels and meetings with men of learning had left him with the conviction that the broader one's education and the wider one's opportunity for travel, the better. As stated in the outline of his scheme, "It is not intended to cut off post-graduate students from education in Europe; it is contemplated to select the best for further training in Europe or America with a view to their future return to this country," so that, enriched by further education and contacts abroad, they would be better fitted to serve the country. It was therefore "necessary to make ample provision for scholarships and fellowships both for the students in the Institution and for those who proceed from it to Europe or America". This was but another instance of Jamsetji's progressive outlook, his ability to plan for the future.

Nor was it feared that there would be inadequate employment opportunities for the men leaving the Institute.

The medical and sanitary branch would train a class of persons who were very much needed in the country. The telegraph service would provide many openings to men trained in electrical science. In the Princely States also, there was a considerable employment potential for highly trained Indian graduates. These avenues were merely examples. There were many others.

As regards the philosophical and educational branch, the deputation explained that these subjects had been included to give "a completeness and rotundity to the scheme", and that it was intended to give the Institution the character of a University, which it would lack unless those subjects were included. One of the chief purposes of that branch was to train teachers for secondary and higher education, a training which could not be overrated. Ethics and psychology had been included, as they were an integral part of the course of training in educational methods, and it was for this reason that in Europe they were always associated with such courses.

Jamsetji had complete faith in his research institute. He was already delighted with the performance of the scholars who had been sent abroad for higher education under his 1892 plan and considered them an outstanding investment for the country. At this stage, it might be as well to contrast his profitable liberal views and his broad nationalism with the narrowness and sectarianism of some of his co-religionists who regretted his decision to divert such a large portion of his wealth from the Parsee community by giving it to the proposed Institute from which the entire nation—and not the Parsee community exclusively—would benefit. When asked about their attitude in an interview, Jamsetji explained his ideas of philanthropy in these terms: "There is one kind of charity common enough among us and which is certainly a good thing, though I do not think

it the best thing we can have. It is that patchwork philanthropy which clothes the ragged, feeds the poor and heals the sick and halt. I am far from decrying the noble spirit which seeks to help a poor or suffering fellow-being. But charities of the hospital and poor asylum kind, are comparatively more common and fashionable among us Parsees. What advances a nation or community is not so much to prop up its weakest and most helpless members as to lift up the best and most gifted so as to make them of the greatest service to the country. I prefer this constructive philanthropy which seeks to educate and develop the faculties of the best of our young men. And if this is to be done, what I ask my fellow-Parsees is: What difference is it to them whether it is exclusively to their benefit or open to all? If able professors and specialists are to be obtained, the cost will be the same, whether it is only a few Parsees alone that attend their lectures or young men of all communities." In any event, Jamsetji added, "The Parsees cannot supply more than a very few students for each post-graduate class, and it would be foolish to have costly professors to lecture to only two or three Parsees to the exclusion of hundreds who were anxious to benefit likewise."

In spite of his many preoccupations, Jamsetji was at this period conducting correspondence of a most interesting nature with the Foreign Office in England. It concerned the rights of Indians as full subjects of the British Crown under a Treaty which the latter had made with Japan.

Japan for many years was extremely cautious about receiving foreigners. For centuries it had excluded visitors and was only now beginning to relax this attitude. In August 1894, Her Majesty the Queen, Empress of India, and His Majesty the Emperor of Japan entered into a Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. One section of the Treaty dealt with the personal privileges and rights of the subjects of

the two contracting parties; the other section dealt with commerce and navigation. In the first section, the subjects of each party were granted full rights of residence and travel, ownership and disposal of property, and access to the Courts of Justice in the territory of the other. The second part contained clauses relating to reciprocal freedom of commerce between the two countries, the imposition of duties and other trade matters.

Though India and Indians were expressly excluded from the stipulations of the Treaty, there was a provision that the Treaty might be extended to the excepted colonies by a notice from Her Majesty's representative at Tokyo to the Japanese Government within two years of the date of application of the Treaty.

To Jamsetji's knowledge, no such notice had yet been given. Remembering that at the time every Indian was as much a subject of Queen Victoria as any Englishman and ever mindful of the rights and dignities of India, he had a letter sent to the Foreign Office on the 27th April, 1898, enquiring what his position would be in travelling and trading personally in Japan and whether he could hold land in his own name.

In their reply of the 8th May, 1898, the Foreign Office informed him that the Government of India did not deem it expedient that the new Treaty with Japan should be made applicable to India. The Foreign Office added that the Japanese Civil Code gave to every foreigner all civil rights enjoyed by Japanese subjects, except those expressly denied to them by legislation, such as the right to hold land in fee-simple or to own and publish newspapers. As regards trade and commerce, the reply pointed out that goods from India would be subject to the Japanese general tariff and not the conventional tariff under the treaty with foreign powers.

Jamsetji was far from satisfied with this reply. It missed the essential point of his question and he wrote again to the Foreign Office on the 4th July, enquiring why the Government of India had decided to allow the time-limit for giving notice of application of treaty to India to expire, without ascertaining the views of the principal Indian merchants trading with Japan or those of the Chamber of Commerce. He also enquired whether, as a subject of the Empress of India, he was not entitled to all the advantages which the Englishmen residing and trading in Japan enjoyed.

For the benefit of the Public Department and the Foreign Office, the Political Secretary made the following revealing minute:—

“Mr. Tata is much in with the Congress Party. In public, he loses no opportunity of abusing England and even calls any article made in England by a bad name. He boasts that in his commercial dealings he prefers foreign to British goods. I suspect that his enquiries in this matter are not *bona fide* and I think we should be cautious. He is immensely wealthy.”

As could only be expected, none of this was revealed to Jamsetji and no specific explanation for excepting India from the provisions of the Treaty was given. All that he was told in the official reply was that the Secretary of State, after consulting the Government of India, had acted in the matter of the Japanese Treaty as seemed best in the interests of India at that time.

But Jamsetji's representations to the Foreign Office did not go in vain. Commerce treaties with Germany and Belgium, were now being negotiated. In this connection, Lord George Hamilton considered the general question of inclusion of India in commerce treaties with foreign powers

and wrote to the Governor-General of India-in-Council on the 14th July, 1898, stating that if the latter agreed, he was "disposed to think that the extension to India of the privileges and personal rights secured under such a treaty will be of advantage". He also asked for his views on the accession, if this were still possible, of India to the treaty with Japan.

In this matter as in others, Jamsetji had seized every opportunity to advance the cause of India and of Indians.

CHAPTER TEN

FOUNDER OF MODERN IRON AND STEEL INDUSTRY

(1899 continued)

JAMSETJI was now 60 years of age. His health, never perfect after his first illness, had begun to fail, but neither age nor ailment had any effect upon his stubbornness. He had difficulty in climbing stairs and alighting from his carriage, but would not accept any offer of assistance. His sons wanted the servants to carry him up and down the steps, but he would not let them. In spite of his doctor's warning against all unnecessary exertion, he would climb the two flights of steps at the Elphinstone Club every day, and it was not without considerable persuasion that he allowed a chair to be placed on the landing, where he could take a brief rest, before going on to the next floor. His defence of his stubbornness was that he did not wish to appear conspicuous or "fussy" or to be unnecessarily mollicoddled. The possibility that this might shorten his years on earth did not seem to worry him.

Jamsetji had a kindly face with a soft flowing beard, which had now turned white with age. He was generally dressed in a simple white costume; and he wore the usual, orthodox Parsee head-dress. There were no signs of affluence about him, except for his perfectly appointed brougham, in which he took real pride.

Jamsetji was always angered by any evidence of racial distinction and was held in high esteem by every Englishman who knew him. He had many English friends and he

would talk freely to them and with no inhibitions whatever. In an interview in February, 1899, however, he said: "If some Englishmen treated us more considerately, there would be more harmony than there is... it is in the clubs and institutions that a certain amount of antipathy is stirred up, and that is all." When we remember the attitude of the average Englishman to the Indian at that time, and the fact that many clubs limited their membership to Englishmen and other Europeans, excluding Indians almost completely, Jamsetji's remark was obviously not without foundation and was indeed generous.

A friend to the poor, he sought to mitigate the misery of others by freeing them from some of the social evils which oppressed them. One particular reform he had in mind concerned the liquor trade. He was a teetotaler and hated alcohol. In particular, he hated the practice that then prevailed (and is current even today) of selling liquor to the highest bidder; accordingly he offered to act as a licensee for a large area and to guarantee the same revenue as the Government had earned during the previous decade, on condition that they would spend any surplus on education. Once, when he was taken suddenly ill, he said to the doctor who attended on him: "Doctor, let me have a little brandy; I think it would do me good." The doctor, who was a relative stranger, did not approve, though Jamsetji said that it had helped him in the past. Later, Jamsetji burst out, "What did the fool mean? Does he think I like drink? I hate it like poison. I would like to throw it all into the sea!" Jamsetji never missed an opportunity to condemn the drinking of alcohol.

Looking for new ventures, Jamsetji now weighed up the export possibilities of that king of fruits, the mango, which grew in abundance outside Bombay and in many other parts of the country. He and his father had cultivated it on

their estate at Navsari. The country's entire mango crop was for internal use and there was no export trade. For a number of years now Jamsetji had been sending this fruit to his friend, Sir George Birdwood, in England. Birdwood was very fond of mangoes and had arranged with some of his other friends to send him small consignments of this fruit from time to time. Perhaps, thought Jamsetji, mangoes and other Indian fruit could be profitably exported from Bombay to London. He had in mind the use for this trade of the empty cold storage vessels coming from Australia. He contacted Covent Garden fruit importers about the marketing of Indian fruit and he wanted the P. and O. Company to arrange for the transport of five hundred tons of mangoes and other Indian fruit to London. But he wanted each scheme to pay. When, on enquiry, he learned that the P. and O. had been experimenting for several years on the best methods of transporting mangoes, but without success, and that the cost was high, Jamsetji dropped his export scheme. This was another well-intentioned failure, but again it does not affect the greatness of the man. Even with airlines, and the possibility of having mangoes in London within twenty-four hours, the trade has yet to reach the volume which Jamsetji had in mind for his very first export shipment.

The failure of rains and the consequent outbreak of famine were periodical events in the country. Towards the end of 1899, when one such famine seemed to loom ahead, a writer in *The Times of India* suggested the digging of artesian wells in areas threatened by drought. Within four days the *Times* admitted that it was "unaware that a prominent citizen of Bombay had not only made an extensive study of this branch of hydrostatics, but had long ago tested the efficiency of these wells in one of the very districts now smitten with famine and drought". The reference was, of course, to

Jamsetji, who had sunk wells successfully in his home district several years ago. His idea at one time was to go in for extensive fruit-farming with the help of irrigation from artesian wells, but his time and money were absorbed by so many other projects that he could not make much headway with the scheme. But it was never out of his mind. He had studied the system of artificial water supply to the sheep farms in Australia and had seen many wells near London, at Grenelle in France and in America. He had also learnt from his own experience of well-sinking. In *The Times of India*, December 7, 1899, he wrote: "While sinking my first artesian well at Navsari sixteen years ago, I had no knowledge of the nature of the strata to be passed through and I had therefore to work in the dark."

During his foreign travels, Jamsetji was always on the look-out for new plants and trees and would buy them immediately if he thought that they could be usefully transplanted to India. In this, as in the case of his other projects it was mainly the welfare of the country that he had in mind. Replying to his son Dorabji who had once asked him why he was spending money on tree-cultivation in India, he wrote: "I am seeking trees that can be cultivated and managed by an ignorant peasantry. If one tree thrives and helps to feed the people, my purpose is served." He had imported peach trees and nut trees from California, and planted them close to his house at Panchgani. The peaches, however, were not successful. He set up an experimental fruit farm on the Beggar Bush Estate at Bangalore. He tried to cultivate the vine near Deolali and also near Poona. He purchased extensive lands at Dumas, near Surat, and on the Tapi river in order to grow special kinds of grass for industrial purposes.

In 1899, during his visit to Mahe, where he was thinking of setting up a cotton mill, he drafted a memorandum

on French colonial trade for consideration by the French Minister of the Colonies, and was promised an introduction to the President of the Republic, but nothing came of it. He also exchanged correspondence with a French Shipping line, the Messageries Maritimes, regarding their steamers calling at Mahe so that he could transport cotton under the French flag and pay reduced duty.

Meantime, the Empress Mills at Nagpur had witnessed modernisation and considerable expansion during the period from 1884 to 1899. The Company was doing exceedingly well, and between 1886 and 1899, its capital was twice increased. The shareholders received not only good dividends but also a number of bonus shares reflecting the Company's growth. This had been Jamsetji's first major industrial venture, and it was a great success. It helped to make him both rich and famous.

In 1899, Major (later General) R. H. Mahon, previously Superintendent of the Government Ordnance Factories, Cossipore, issued a valuable report on the possibilities of the manufacture of iron and steel in India. Apart from the question of size, Major Mahon laid down certain principles for general guidance. First, the plant should be "thoroughly modern in every detail"; the management must "consist of persons combining expert knowledge with local experience"; and "economy in methods of collecting and assembling the raw material" must also be "insisted upon as a necessary element of success". Jamsetji had already visited Lohara to see the iron deposits for himself. He was, however, dubious as to whether the Warora coal was of sufficiently good coking quality for the smelting of iron ore. He arranged to have the coal analysed, but the result was not satisfactory.

It has to be remembered that the policy of the Government towards private enterprise was far from favourable in

those days. Lord Lawrence, the Viceroy of India, had himself exclaimed on one occasion: "I know what private enterprise means! It means robbing the Government!" The general dislike of businessmen who were disparagingly called "box-wallahs", was said to go back to the period of wild speculation in the country in the 60's, which ended so disastrously at the end of the American Civil War. It was during this period that Lord Lawrence had become Viceroy and he saw private enterprise at its worst. It was no wonder, in the circumstances, that the mining and prospecting regulations which were apparently deliberately designed to prevent the country's mineral development were kept in force even after the speculation had ended. These rules were, in no small measure, responsible for damping Jamsetji Tata's enthusiasm for iron and steel. The year 1899, however, was to witness a radical change in policy. This was the year in which Lord Curzon, with his elaborate programme of multi-directional reforms, revised the mining and prospecting rules, giving a new stimulus to Jamsetji's determination to establish an iron and steel industry in India.

Jamsetji kept extensive newspaper cuttings on whatever had been printed about Indian minerals. A change in the policy of Government towards private enterprise and the revision of the mining and prospecting rules (which was strong evidence of that change) as well as the wealth of material contained in the reports of Ritter von Schwarz and Major Mahon, gave a new meaning to his quest for iron and steel, bringing it within the range of practicality.

He now began to work with new hope and vigour to relate his plan to reality. Few thought that he would succeed. Efforts were made to persuade English capital to come into this country and set up the first steel works in the new favourable atmosphere, but with no result. The risks were considered too great. The story is best told in

the words of Lovat Fraser, who wrote: "Lord Curzon afterwards tried, without success, to induce prominent English capitalists to start great iron and steel works in India; and possibly no one was more surprised than the Viceroy when a courageous and prescient Indian, the late Mr. Jamsetji Tata, volunteered to undertake the task."¹ As we shall see, his practical genius was to breathe life into the half-forgotten pages of the earlier reports. His astounding energy undiminished with the passage of years, he was to devote himself tirelessly to the foundation of India's first modern steel works.

¹*Curzon and After*, page 321

CHAPTER ELEVEN

IN SEARCH OF VENTURES NEW (1900-1901)

THE most striking feature of the next period of Jamsetji's life was his simultaneous involvement in two vast and important projects. At one and the same time he was planning in detail both his educational institute and the setting up of an iron and steel industry. Either task would have absorbed the total energy of any ordinary man.

Although Jamsetji had announced his scheme of post-graduate research and his proposed endowment in September 1898, laudatory references to his generosity and foresight had not ceased. In *The Hindu* of the 5th January, 1900, a prominent Brahmin was reported to have said: "Mother Bharati has long been crying for a man among her children, and in Mr. Tata she has found the son of her heart."

Jamsetji now decided to revisit England, to carry both his schemes a stage closer to completion. On this visit, he took with him samples of Warora coal for coking experiments in England. As the results were unsatisfactory, he offered a reward to anyone who could suggest a satisfactory method of smelting the Lohara iron ore with Warora coke. No complete solution was received, but as a gesture Jamsetji divided the prize among a number of people whose suggestions were considered helpful.

The experiments on Warora coal were in a sense incidental. The main purpose of his visit was to meet and enlist the help and sympathy of Lord George Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India. It was known that the latter

wished India to advance and, during the interview, he told Jamsetji that it was his great desire that India's industrial development should take place with Indian capital. He urged Jamsetji to go ahead with his iron and steel project, expressing his confidence in him as the right man for the job. But he was not sure whether the Indian iron ore deposits were as rich or the chances of the industry's success as great, as Jamsetji had made them out to be. Jamsetji, of course, had the reports of von Schwarz and Major Mahon and other evidence to support his optimism, and at the suggestion of Lord George he cabled Bombay for them. Encouraged by the warmth and sympathy with which the Secretary of State had received him, Jamsetji felt free to share his thoughts with him. He said that nearly two decades had passed since he first began to concern himself with the possibility of working the Chanda deposits, that he was now relatively old, and, by the grace of God, rich enough to retire and take life easy. But his deep solicitude for the continued and increased well-being of his country would not let him rest. His fear was, he added, that he might be rebuffed by Government officials if he were to persist with the iron and steel project. The Secretary of State urged him to go ahead with his scheme, regarding it as a national duty and, as promised during this interview, he also wrote to the Government of India, expressing his warmest interest in the scheme and indicating his willingness to endorse any steps that the Government of India might take to help this venture.

It was not without reason that Jamsetji had sought to assure himself of the sympathy and assistance of the Secretary of State. The attitude of the Government of India to private enterprise had been hostile, and though Lord Curzon had modified it, the change was too new to inspire confidence that it would last. In any event, the acts of the

Government were subject to the scrutiny of India Office, and this scrutiny was all the closer where any unusual expenditure was involved; and any assistance to the iron and steel project would have meant such expenditure. Jamsetji had a full understanding of how the Government worked, what official objections were likely to be raised and how they might best be overcome.

After discussing his iron and steel scheme, and his failure some two decades ago to make much headway with it because of the Government's opposition to private enterprise, Jamsetji took up with Lord George Hamilton his proposal for a joint trust for the benefit of his family and the endowment of the University of Research. He understood His Lordship to be favourably inclined, though ultimately his hopes were to be disappointed.

The Institute of Research was very much on his mind. He had always declined to accept any commission or other payment out of the profits of the Empress Mills. But in order to strengthen the finances of the proposed Institute, he now planned to charge a 5% commission—as managing agent he could have charged much more—and to add the proceeds to the annual income from his endowment. This proposal provoked much criticism among his friends and within the firm itself.

Righteously indignant, he wrote a letter from England to Dadabhai on the 2nd May, 1900, saying: "You say that I had better drop the scheme till the University scheme has gained greater strength. You say my friends will be glad if I do that; for no one who has come to know of it seems to like it. . . . Now what reason do the friends you speak of assign for the opinions they hold? I must confess that I am almost, if not quite, singular in all India in not charging any commission. But that is my personal business if I choose to do so. . . . Nobody can say that the University

scheme is not a grand and noble one, and the benefits to be derived from it infinitely great. Then why should honest people grudge me the right to claim what I believe is due to me, and make it over for such a noble cause? I can't see how even an ignorant man, except he be malicious, can misunderstand my motives."

Eventually, Jamsetji allowed himself to be prevailed upon to give in to his friends' remonstrances, and he wrote to Dadabhai on the 19th June, 1900, that "as far as reason and argument are concerned, I cannot afford to ignore my friends' remonstrances, but when they come to impressions and sentiments, I do not see why my impressions and sentiments should give way to theirs".

The Government of India had suggested that the scheme for the Institute of Research should be examined by an expert. The Provisional Committee had selected Sir William Ramsay, the famous scientist, for this purpose. Jamsetji made it a point to see him in London and, before the year was out, Ramsay was in India enjoying Jamsetji's hospitality, which, as Ramsay himself said, Jamsetji had raised to a fine art. Jamsetji accompanied the scientist on a sightseeing tour and talked about the Institute on the way, as was his wont to discuss important issues during pleasure outings. On their return, he put him up with his son Dorabji and his wife at their lovely residence on Malabar Hill. Ramsay was so delighted with the thought and care and the fine hospitality he had received during his stay in India that he longed to revisit the East. So profound was the impression created by the visit that his biographer, Sir W. A. Tilden, records in his book, *Life of Sir W. Ramsay*, that "the glowing memories and the friendships formed and consolidated there coloured all his after-life".

Jamsetji, though a most broad-minded nationalist, was fully mindful of his special duties to his co-religionists.

During his stay in London in 1900, he invited some seventy Parsees to a dinner at a well-known restaurant. He always made a perfect host, and his guests were delighted.

Jamsetji was now in his early sixties. There was so much he meant to accomplish, and time was running out. The slow headway of his educational scheme filled him with impatience. Ramsay was still in India when some of Jamsetji's friends suggested that he should amalgamate the amount of his proposed endowment with the general fund that was being raised for Queen Victoria's memorial. Jamsetji was prepared to consider any suggestion likely to hasten the birth of his Institute, as he had so much else to attend to, and also because of the sense of pessimism created by the Viceroy's remark that the endowment "would benefit but a small number of persons out of a population of even a province or district".¹ Jamsetji, therefore, agreed to the suggested amalgamation, but on subsequent advice withdrew the offer.

Jamsetji was an inveterate reader. Dickens and Thackeray were his favourites and, next to them, Mark Twain and Bret Harte. Nor was he insensitive to poetry, which he loved to read aloud; it was pleasant to hear him, for nature had endowed him with a rich, sonorous voice. Once, during her stay in India, Lady Ramsay had gathered a few friends around her, and was treating them to readings from Robert Browning. Unobtrusively, Jamsetji took the book from his hostess and began to read "A Grammarian's Funeral" with great gusto.

Around 1900, his mind still seeking new ventures, he put up a small cold storage plant for fruit and fish: it served to augment the city's food supply. Around this project his imagination began to evolve great schemes of refrigerated wagons, carrying meat and fish up north, and bringing

¹*The Times of India*, March 13, 1901

back fruit for Bombay; and of massive air-conditioning, involving the construction on the spot where the Prince of Wales Museum now stands, of a circular building containing offices for merchants and bankers, and public rooms for concerts and entertainments, with a colossal ice house in the centre. The idea was that, while the ice produced would meet the needs of Bombay, the manufacturing process itself would cool the surrounding buildings and enable the occupants to work at their desks or enjoy entertainments in cool comfort, unaffected by the oppressive weather outside. Jamsetji's dream included the hope that the Government would copy his model and build offices for civil servants and barracks for troops in this way, so that they could stay and work in the plains throughout the year, instead of migrating to the hills during the summer months at so much cost to the Indian exchequer. Plans were prepared for the circular edifice and the ice-house, but the scheme never came to fruition. Once again, Jamsetji's imagination had leapt across the years and had conceived something that time would later bring to birth. For several decades had to pass before air-conditioning could become a reality in India.

Among his papers there is a draft of a letter to Sir George Birdwood made by Padshah, under his personal instructions. It appears from its contents that the letter was inspired by the disagreement that had occurred between Jamsetji and Sir George Birdwood in their attitude to the Congress, and over the preference that Jamsetji gave and urged others to give to foreign lines in competition with the P. and O., because the latter was exercising discrimination between the European and the Indian. A believer in British rule and in the British Empire, an admirer of British culture, he counted many Englishmen among his friends. But even friendship could not cause him to compromise on matters of principle. He did not spare his English friends if

they did or said anything that was wrong, or that in his view was unworthy of the name and reputation of England or of the British Empire, or anything that injured the interests or honour of India. Jamsetji was too much of a nationalist to countenance any denunciation of the Congress and its work, or of the country's habits and practices, its religion and culture, its sentiments and aspirations.

By 1900, Jamsetji Tata had attained a position of pre-eminence in the cotton industry. He had given substantial evidence of his outstanding competence in management and organisation, and of his prudence in the husbandry of financial resources. He always insisted on the purchase of the latest equipment. He knew how to handle colleagues and subordinates, for he understood human nature. He had faith in the individual, and believed in his ultimate worth. While, therefore, he planned and laboured for the economic advancement and better welfare of the nation, he transformed in the process a casual, ill-disciplined and often improvident mass of workers into a factory population, well-organised, well-trained to handle the latest equipment and obtain good results, well-looked after and possessing a sense of belonging to the organisation.

It was his savings from the cotton mills that enabled him to finance his other schemes and make a major contribution to the economic growth and prosperity of the nation. Profit, in his hands, represented the power with which to make further advance and to take Indian industry further along the road of development.

As stated earlier, Lord Curzon was personally agreeable to separate legislation in favour of a family settlement in perpetuity, on condition—which he had reasons to believe Jamsetji Tata would accept—that the latter saw his way to separate the endowment of the Institute from the family settlement. But the Government of India, after

consulting the Secretary of State, had expressed their inability to promote such legislation. In the circumstances, Jamsetji had withdrawn the stipulation for the family trust, but at the same time had expressed the hope that the Government might see their way to revise their decision. During his visit to England, he submitted to Lord George⁸ Hamilton a memorandum on the subject, dated the 29th June, 1900, prepared by Padshah, together with another memorandum prepared by himself, as an elucidatory supplement to the first. Jamsetji felt, and apparently not without reason, that the legal feasibility of his proposal on the basis of precedents, and the effects of his offer and of its non-acceptance, had not yet been fully explained to the Government. The purpose of his fresh representation was to make available this information.

It is a mistake to think that Jamsetji was thinking primarily of his family and only secondarily of the Institute. He was thinking of both, but primarily of the Institute. This point needs emphasis, lest it be thought that he was trying to strike a bargain with the Government, mainly to protect his family's interest in perpetuity. In any case, neither he nor his two sons needed any such protection. Considering that some of the well-known universities in the West had from time to time been in financial distress, it was really the Institute that would have suffered if Jamsetji's munificence had been withdrawn.

Jamsetji was invited informally to meet a high-level committee of India House officials in London in October 1900. In reply to a question, he explained that he was still prepared to give half the entire property without any permanent family settlement, and the reason why he had revived his earlier proposal was that the Provisional Committee of the Institute preferred to have the additional benefit which the latter would provide. Towards the end, he

repeated that he was prepared to accept either of the two schemes.

It was India House that had first turned down Jamsetji Tata's proposal for a family settlement. But as a result of his written and verbal representations, it now seemed to favour his proposal.

Jamsetji knew that it would help the India Council in considering his University Scheme, if he could place before it figures of the annual grants made by the Government of India to the different universities. He, therefore, wrote to Sir Charles Lyall a demi-official letter dated the 2nd November, 1900, asking for figures, not for the last three or five years, with which a normal, careful person would have been content, but for the last thirty years. Sir Charles Lyall's reply came promptly and stated that "to obtain the figures for the last thirty years would require prolonged research", but he added relevantly that he understood that "any statement assuming an analogy between the existing universities, and the Institution which you contemplate, would necessarily be misleading, since the former are merely examining bodies, and any grants made by Government were discontinued as soon as the revenues from examination fees had risen sufficiently to render the universities self-supporting". The only university that still received Government aid was the Punjab University. These grants thus "were of a character totally distinct from the grants made to various Arts and Technical Colleges where teaching is given".

As stated in an earlier chapter, Jamsetji was a great believer in a liberal education, in the arts and literature and in the humanities. When, therefore, Sir William Ramsay expressed the hope that at a future date subjects not directly scientific in character or at least not directly connected with industry, would be introduced, he was echoing what was dear to Jamsetji's own heart. Ramsay had

been making enquiries regarding the possibility of collecting together a number of men interested in the languages, the literature and the antiquities of India. He had learned that a small number of enthusiasts, possessing means and leisure, would be glad to work at such subjects under the guidance of some eminent European orientalists, whose services could undoubtedly be secured, if even a very moderate endowment were offered. The latter, Ramsay thought, would certainly introduce the system of instruction in a "Seminar"—a sort of literary laboratory—with manuscripts and books. There might be similar schemes for the subjects of "Economical Science and Statistics". These proposals, however, related to the future and therefore had to wait.

CHAPTER TWELVE

A MAN WITH A ZEST FOR LIFE (1901-1902)

ON the 9th April, 1901, Jamsetji Tata wrote to the Government of India, forwarding a copy of the revised draft bill to constitute a University of Research, and also enquiring whether they had heard from Lord George Hamilton regarding his proposal for the joint settlement of his properties. What Jamsetji wrote in this context gives some clue as to what must have transpired during his meeting with the Secretary of State: "On the eve of my leaving England, His Lordship, the Secretary of State, kindly assured me that my request for this settlement would be granted by Government. Lord Hamilton charged me, in case I had occasion to be commanded to Lord Curzon's presence, to inform the Viceroy verbally that such was the decision of the Secretary of State, since the official despatch on the subject might take a little time to reach His Excellency. I have, therefore, taken the question as finally settled, but as no communication from your office has been made to me, I take the liberty of enquiring whether the valuation by the designated officer may not proceed on this basis. For, if the said despatch has not arrived, I should wish to communicate with the Secretary of State again, and represent that an early attention to the matter would expedite the legal constitution of the University."

On the 10th May, 1901, the Government of India sent a reply. Referring to his proposal for a joint settlement, it stated: "The Government of India have up to date received no intimation from the Secretary of State on the subject,

nor have they any reason to believe that such an intimation is likely to arrive." The reply then drew his attention to the earlier correspondence on the subject and to the proceedings of the Simla Conference of October 1899 which were conducted on the basis of his agreement to dissociate the University endowment from any stipulation like personal or family settlement. Pointing out that it was now too late to depart from that agreement, it added: "There is no reason to suppose that the Secretary of State is prepared to act in this matter except in the closest association with the Government of India, and it is to be feared that any hopes that you may have formed of an opposite character are likely to be disappointed."

This reply must have come as a surprise to Jamsetji Tata. Ever ready to fight to the last for any cause in which he believed, he decided to seek confirmation or clarification from the Secretary of State himself, and wrote to Mr. Ritchie (later Sir Richmond) of the India Office on the 17th May: "Before I left London I was privileged to be accorded an interview on the subject by the Secretary of State who gave me to understand that the Joint Trust was no longer a difficulty, and that a despatch conceding the proposal would be forwarded in due time (*i.e.*, after consulting the India Council); His Lordship understood, however, that I might have an interview early in December with Lord Curzon at Bangalore, in which event I was instructed verbally to inform Lord Curzon of the decision expected to be formally arrived at later by the Secretary of State-in-Council. I arrived in Bangalore just a day after the Viceroy had left; so I wrote to the Private Secretary what I should have said personally if a meeting had been possible. For months I heard nothing of the subject until I wrote to Mr. Hewett, the Home Secretary. Early in April I sent copies of the correspondence. May I point out that Mr. Hewett's letter makes my position not

highly agreeable? Have I, then, misreported His Lordship's views? Frankly, I do not entertain even the possibility of it." "Meanwhile," Jamsetji concluded, "to prevent delays, I have offered to allow the valuations to proceed on the old basis—confident that His Lordship will direct procedure in conformity with the views he was so good as to express to me in November."

It will be recalled that in 1894, when Jamsetji was induced to support the revival of the Tariff, he had placed implicit reliance on a private assurance (which could have no real validity) that the imposition of an import duty on cotton goods would not be accompanied by a countervailing excise on local manufactures, and he was extremely indignant when he found that the private assurance had not been kept. A man of honour, thought Jamsetji, was bound by his word, official or non-official. In the present case, he had mistaken the informal views of His Lordship for the final orders of Government. Once again, he was disappointed.

Though the Secretary of State had to leave the matter in the hands of the Government of India, he regretted the misunderstanding and any disappointment which might be caused to Jamsetji; at the same time he expressed his appreciation of Jamsetji's public spirit and contribution to the cause of scientific education in India, in unmistakable terms: "His Lordship asks me to repeat to you the expression of his appreciation of the public spirit which has led you to make your proposals, and of the insight you have shown into the needs of India. The discussion that has taken place over your scheme, even though it may not end in any immediate practical result, will at any rate, His Lordship thinks, have done much to advance the cause of the organisation of scientific education in India with a view to the industrial development of the country." The letter also added, as a gesture, that His Lordship would be very glad if Bennett would call at the

India Office, as suggested by Jamsetji. Remembering that Lord George Hamilton knew this country well, having been Under-Secretary for India for four years and Secretary of State for seven, and had a deep and abiding interest in its progress and prosperity, it is possible that, if the decision lay entirely with him, he would have accepted Jamsetji's proposal for a joint trust, since this would be in the larger interests of the Institute and the country.

All this while Jamsetji, with his boundless energy, was also working on his iron and steel project. He was now applying for prospecting licences for the Lohara and Peepulgaon areas. Lord George Hamilton's interest in the scheme coupled with the recent change in the Government's attitude to private enterprise and corporations encouraged Sir Andrew Fraser, Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, to give a favourable reception to his applications. These applications kept Lord Curzon informed of Jamsetji's movements and progress. His experience in cotton had taught him earlier how much he had to rely upon carefully chosen assistants for results: prospecting for iron ore was to reinforce this lesson. At first no dramatic headway was made and Jamsetji was thought by the Government to be unduly slow with his scheme. But his prudence would not let him be hustled; every step forward had to be carefully considered.

Every now and then, Jamsetji would visit Nagpur to see how his Empress Mills were doing. There was a young English boy, Norman Redford, at Nagpur at this time. His father was Mill Manager and Norman, many years later, joined Tata Limited in London, eventually retiring as one of its Directors. Writing in the *Tata Monthly Bulletin* of March 1949, he referred to Jamsetji's visits, to which he always looked forward and said that while business would be discussed "down at the Mill", there would be a general get-together at "The Tamarinds", where Bezonji Mehta

lived. "Here it was," Norman Redford wrote, "that Mr. Tata shed his responsibilities and displayed himself in many lights. The numerous sides of his personality were always a delight to see, and I remember my father remarking on several occasions that he was astonished at Mr. Tata's extent of knowledge on a large variety of subjects. Not only was he quick of understanding, but he also had an uncanny sense of anticipation of what the other party was going to say. His ready grasp of essential details was a by-word, but to me his most outstanding gift was his capacity to anticipate what was going to be said or asked. It was not uncommon for someone to begin explaining a point, when Mr. Tata would break in and complete the explanation. It could be disconcerting, as I had seen. Occasionally, these informal gatherings included businessmen and, at times, the conversations would turn to Mr. Tata's business affairs. In these matters, he was equally bewildering to his friendly adversary, stressing points in their favour." The remark that he made at one such meeting that "he was selling the machines better than the representatives" was neither frivolous nor exaggerated.

It was Jamsetji's kindly nature and generosity that Norman Redford recollected best, especially as he was the recipient of a number of his generous gifts, and these are all the more appreciated when one is young. "I cannot recall an occasion," he wrote, "when we met, either in Nagpur or Bombay, when I did not benefit by some remembrance of the event, either by a present or an action of a fatherly nature."

The young Redford paid numerous visits to Esplanade House and found them "vastly entertaining". Jamsetji would display his various treasures with a quiet pride, explaining in detail the sources and uses of his various finds, and this "could not fail to create, and indeed did create, a bond of affection between old and young". Jamsetji's complaint was

that "no one takes much interest in these things of mine". Though by present-day standards, his collection might not command much attention, Jamsetji was certainly able to infect his children with enthusiasm for learning, as can be abundantly evidenced "at the Museum in Bombay where lies the exquisite collection of a later generation".

Norman Redford spent much time at "The Tamarinds", and "not infrequently had the pleasure of a drive around in the evenings with Jamsetji and Mr. Bezongji—'just to take the boy for an airing'." During such rides, "the general topic of conversation was schemes, schemes and more schemes. I was content to sit and enjoy the ride but, as I now recall those jaunts, I realise more and more the tremendous urge Mr. Tata had for the needs of his country and the manner in which those needs could be satisfied. I can see the questioning look in Mr. Bezongji's eye at some point expressed, and almost before it was spoken, an answer was furnished in all its completeness."

Referring to his capacity for patience and tolerance and his belief in the innate goodness of man, the account goes on: "Never did I see Mr. Tata impatient and intolerant, nor did I ever see him critical of others' shortcomings. In this respect, he was the counterpart of Mr. Bezongji who was always ready to see the better side of a person. Many have been the occasions when I heard him say, 'Well, well, surely there must be some good in him, somewhere.'"

On July 5, 1901, Jamsetji presided at the inauguration of a new spinning-shed at Nagpur. His speech on the occasion, one of the few speeches he ever made, laid stress upon business honesty and straightforwardness as well as on consistent and high quality in production and labour welfare. The speech contained lessons which trade and industry would do well to remember at all times, anywhere. He said: "We have continued to enjoy prosperity, even

with' adverse times to fight against. Our relations with all concerned are the most friendly. We have maintained the same character for straightforward dealing with our constituents and customers. Our products have continued to be of the same high quality, and therefore command the best reputation and realise the highest prices." He then described the numerous welfare measures the Company had taken for the workers, which had produced, as J. E. O'Connor remarked, a "cheerful and healthy air of content... in the workpeople". Proceeding, Jamsetji said: "I mention these facts only to point out that with honest and straightforward business principles, close and careful attention to details and ability to take advantage of favourable opportunities and circumstances, there is scope for success."

Always a pioneer, in small things as in great, Jamsetji was the first man in India to fit his carriages with rubber tyres; he was also among the first to bring a motor-car to Bombay. He refused to engage a chauffeur, and his coachman had to learn to drive this new and strange machine. If, for any reason, the car came to a standstill (as motor-cars often did in those early days), it would be pushed home by coolies. Jamsetji had one of his servants trained as a mechanic, so that he would be able to attend to minor defects, though not always with success. When, however, it came to the assembling of the first diesel engine that he had brought from Europe, and getting it going, the job had been accomplished before the German engineer arrived for this purpose. Why import foreign experts, unless absolutely necessary? "Let the Indian learn to do things for himself,"—that was the principle on which Jamsetji worked.

Jamsetji Saklatvala was at this time his land-agent. Saklatvala had found for him large tracts of vacant land in Bombay and Salsette at prices ranging from three annas to one rupee per square yard, thus strengthening the arguments

against the unreasonable revenue demands of the Government. Jamsetji was greatly impressed by his ability and appointed him his own land manager, giving him qualified engineers to assist in the work. This was the beginning of Jamsetji's Land and Building Department.

Jamsetji Saklatvala had many interesting anecdotes to tell. Once he was accompanying Jamsetji from Esplanade House to the Sewri Quarries in his coach, hauled by a stout Australian horse. Jamsetji had not been driving for long, when his hands and fingers began to ache from the effort of controlling the horse. He turned over the reins to Jamsetji Saklatvala to manage as best he could, in spite of the latter's protests that he had never before handled a carriage in his life: a near-disaster resulted from this decision. Saklatvala, nervous and bewildered, tugged at the unaccustomed reins, and drove the carriage full tilt against the Byculla Station gate. Jamsetji took back the reins and himself drove to the Quarries. But during the return journey, in order to give his friend some self-confidence, he again turned over the reins to him. His heart palpitating with apprehension, Saklatvala managed to drive as far as the Victoria Gardens. Once there, he sighed with relief, for Jamsetji then allowed him to alight from the coach and walk to his home close by.

One morning he and two others were accompanying Jamsetji, in his bullock-drawn country cart, to his cottage at Juhu. When they were more than half-way across the mud flats where the aerodrome now stands, the cart stuck, and the bullocks were knee-deep in mud. They summoned some villagers for assistance, and the latter carried Jamsetji's companions on their shoulders to dry land. Jamsetji, however, declined to be carried in this manner; the cart, with him sitting in it, had to be dragged out by some ten men. In spite of the incident, he was in excellent spirits, and

had his breakfast at Juhu, as planned, before returning to the Fort.

Jamsetji enjoyed such outings and was oblivious of any risk. On his way to Juhu, he would cross a twenty-foot-deep trench by means of a wooden plank, fixed with the turn-screw of a sluice gate; thus a little carelessness in crossing could have resulted in a nasty fall. One Sunday evening, after spending a strenuous day in his country cart, Jamsetji was returning home at about 7.15 p.m. with his land agent. They crossed the Vesava Creek, and as they were alighting from the country boat, Jamsetji tripped, and measured his length on the wet sand and mud. He was picked up and helped to his feet. His white flannel coat was bespattered with black, wet sand. He brushed aside the incident; both of them then proceeded to the Khar Road Club, where Jamsetji had arranged a sumptuous dinner for some fifteen of his old friends. Jamsetji asked Saklatvala to stay to dinner and in spite of the latter's remonstrances, he made him take the seat that was reserved for himself. Lively conversation and hilarity marked the evening. When the party broke up, it was already a quarter past ten which was in those days considered quite late.

Jamsetji's bungalow in Mahad stood on a hill-top; on the slopes of the hill he also had a small cottage which he seldom used. Below, he carried out yet another experiment and had built a small sea-water pool to rear turtles. Again, he pursued his idea with care and thoroughness. Once, he ordered large-sized turtles from Karachi, and of these he sent one to the village of Anik which had a small lake. It is said that the turtle was so large and heavy that a cart had to be engaged for its transport!

Still seeking new ideas and new plans, he also experimented with poultry farming on his Navsari Estate, but

without success. All the English fowl which he had so carefully obtained died within four months of arrival.

Another large scheme was now simmering in Jamsetji's mind, the Mahim River Reclamation scheme. No source of information was left untapped when he was contemplating any new venture. On this occasion, he asked Jamsetji Saklatvala to arrange a dinner one evening for the two of them at a second-class hotel at Bandra. "But why not at the Bandra Club?" asked Saklatvala. Jamsetji insisted on keeping to his original choice without assigning any reason, leaving his friend guessing. At the hotel, Jamsetji asked for the manager and invited him to join them at dinner as his guest. The manager, who was a Parsee and knew Jamsetji, preferred to stand and serve, instead of sharing his table. Jamsetji subjected him to a volley of questions, relating to the availability of different varieties of fish in the Mahim and Bandra Creeks, and in certain other areas. Only then did Saklatvala realise why Jamsetji had decided to dine at this second-class hotel. As always, he was collecting information at first hand for his new plans.

Jamsetji's Mahim Creek scheme involved some twelve hundred acres and promised many benefits to the city. In submitting his plans to the Collector of Thana, he said: "The chief advantage will be the improvement in the health of Bombay consequent on the reclamation of drowned lands, the malarial exhalations from which are at present carried to Bombay island by the north wind. I propose to clear the swamps of the present growth of mangrove, and to convert them into a pasture-ground for milch cattle. Some bushes that thrive on salt water yield a most valuable fodder for cattle; and this vegetation would absorb the salt water flowing over the ground at high tide once a fortnight; and thus Bombay would be free of the nuisance of unhealthy winds that pass over tracks which are alternately dry and

under water. The pasture-ground would help the health of Bombay not merely by contributing to check malarial breezes, but it would also improve the quality of meat by permitting superior grazing to the cattle brought for slaughter. It is possible that later I may find it not unprofitable to construct large-scale stables on reclaimed ground for the quartering of buffaloes whose accommodation now within the city appears to me not contributory to its health."

Earlier, at Anik and Kurla, Jamsetji Tata had already carried out experimental reclamation on his lands, so that it was against a background of practical experience that he now felt ready to go in for this new and large scheme. As he wrote to the Governor of Bombay later: "Even if the venture should not yield much return, I should still consider myself adequately compensated by the resulting improvement of the value of property in the city where I have large landed interests." Because of his interest in modernising the fishing industry, he was also thinking of converting Mahim Creek into fish-ponds, stocking them with white salmon, red mullet, prawns and other kinds of fish for supply to the markets of Bombay. He asked for a ninety-nine-year lease of certain areas and for the right to remove material for reclamation, without having to pay the usual charges to the Government. He also offered a rent of one rupee per acre, excluding, of course, the Mahim River area. These terms, however, were only the opening move in the negotiations. With typical realism Jamsetji was prepared to consider any reasonable alternative. So he wrote to the Governor: "In conclusion, if my offer here may not be acceptable to Government, I request that Government will be pleased to suggest their own terms and conditions."

In the end, Jamsetji had himself to go to see the Governor of Bombay, as he encountered nothing but obstruction at lower levels. For example, the Telegraph

Department was afraid that houses built of inflammable material would be dangerous to their lines. He assured them that such material would not be used and undertook not to disturb the drainage arrangements made by the Municipality of Bombay.

The need to remove the Rifle Range that stood in their way was also a major difficulty, because of the obduracy of the military authorities. Jamsetji suggested rebuilding the range on a site closer to the railway stations, thinking that this would "find favour with all classes of volunteers and military men". In order to counteract the financial objection that might be made, he added: "Furthermore, if I am required to meet the cost of such a change, I will be only too willing to consider the question." Objections came not only from official quarters. Certain fishermen would not give up their traditional fishing rights in the local waters in spite of an offer of compensation. Then the Bandra Municipality refused to abandon the lease of certain grazing grounds. By the time all the obstacles had been removed, it was 1910, and Jamsetji had been dead for some six years. His son Ratanji developed more than one excellent idea for the improvement of Bombay, but the firm's hands were full at this time, necessitating the postponement of the reclamation scheme.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

PIONEER OF HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER (1902 continued)

NOT content with all that he was doing on his iron and steel project and his educational scheme, Jamsetji's mind was now ranging into a fresh field. He had great faith in the future of electrical power, which his experience of the electric drive in his cotton mills had served to strengthen. Not only was it cheaper than coal, but it did not pollute the air either. The economics of the hydro-electric generation of power particularly impressed him. Exposed to the south-west monsoon from the Indian Ocean, the Western Ghats receive an extremely heavy rainfall each year. Why not harness these waters, thought Jamsetji, for the generation of hydro-electric power, instead of letting them run wastefully to the sea? He had the scheme worked out in preliminary form: for the construction of reservoirs and ancillary works and laying of pipelines, extensive areas of land would have to be acquired, vast forests destroyed, and villagers displaced from the valleys. The Government would have to enforce the Land Acquisition Act before the Company could acquire lands for what was deemed to be a public purpose. The project would also need a licence from the Government. Jamsetji, therefore, approached the latter with regard to these essential concessions.

At the beginning of May 1902, Jamsetji Tata sailed for Europe and America by the Austrian Lloyd Steamer, *Imperatrix*. His wife was ailing at this time and he had to leave her to the care of his two sons, and Dr. Row, a family physician and friend. He reached Trieste on the 17th May and

proceeded to Paris, where he stayed for a couple of days and met his cousin, R. D., who had been presiding for some time over the Paris office of Tata and Company, a branch that traded mainly in pearls and silks. In Paris R. D. had married a French lady on an occasion when Jamsetji was in France. After her marriage, she embraced Zoroastrianism and adopted Parsee customs and dress.

Jamsetji Tata then went to London. There Sir William Ramsay gave a small dinner party, at which Jamsetji's educational project was discussed. Referring to this in a letter to his son Dorabji he wrote: "We discussed the subject thoroughly, and the conclusion we came to was to hold the matter in abeyance for a little while. I have also had a short interview with Mr. Ritchie. He was very sympathetic and has asked me to see him now and then. They are all very busy at the India Office owing to the Coronation festivities, and Ritchie says there will be no chance of a good long talk with Lord George until after the first week in July. . . . The best thing to do is to wait till he is more free and has plenty of leisure, and then have a long and comprehensive interview with him."

Writing again to his son Dorabji on the 4th July, Jamsetji said in a postscript: "As regards our iron and coal business, I am sorry nothing has been done and can be done yet. Everybody seems to be absorbed in something of his own. But from next week the Secretary of State has promised to attend to the matter." When he wrote again on the 1st August, the position had not changed. Jamsetji had still not seen the Secretary of State.

Jamsetji went to Karlsbad for a short holiday in August, after which he left for Dusseldorf. There he saw a great Industrial Exhibition, which furnished evidence of the headway Germany had made in iron and steel and in electricity. It demonstrated dramatically something of what the appli-

cation of science to industry could accomplish. He also attended the Congress of the British Iron and Steel Institute during his stay in England.

The electrical contractor for the Taj Mahal Hotel accompanied him on this European trip to purchase equipment. In a letter to his son Dorabji on the 5th September, Jamsetji wrote: "We are all surprised at the superiority and cheapness of all German machines and articles, as compared to English."

Jamsetji had left the supervision of the construction and decoration of the Taj Mahal Hotel to his sons and had undertaken to make purchases for the equipment of the Hotel during his visits to London, Dusseldorf, Berlin and Paris. Like many others at Cambridge, Dorabji had acquired rather specialised aesthetic tastes. Jamsetji found these contrary to his own practical ideas and did not approve of them. The wall-papers, designed by the Socialist poet and artist William Morris, which decorated his son's rooms at Caius had left him completely cold. He knew that the canons of architecture and decoration were arbitrary and subject to the changes of fashion. He had a sound insight into this subject, and wrote to his son: "I am extremely sorry I should unintentionally have injured your feelings in connection with the construction of our new hotel. I thought you had already enough to do to attend to the mill business, and you would be coming in only as a critic of what others were doing. Of course, as you should know by this time, the canons of architecture, decorations, etc., are as yet very arbitrary: even in Europe ideas differ so widely that all the continent still laughs at the pretensions of English architects and *vice versa*. America has wonderful ideas of beauty, or some would call ugliness. Fancy their fondness for brick-red interiors for their drawing-and dining-rooms; we may excuse this in a bedroom, if the

inmate likes it as a warm colour, but some people regard it as hugely ugly. In this matter there is no science of taste established, though it is possible at some remote time such a universal agreement may be brought about. But taste in this matter keeps so constantly varying that often fashions change every few years; and what goes out now may come back five or ten years hence. Under the circumstances, we must try to do what we think our customers would like. But even here we are likely to be at fault; there are no two hotels alike in decoration or furnishings, in such cases somebody with the greatest and most varied experience should be left a free hand. Your experience by this time must be considerable, and I have no objection to leave matters in your hands. But I trust you will take as little as possible from the modern 'aesthete' and avoid their abominable yellows and reds as much as possible. I am trying to leave instructions behind to finish up all our remaining orders in connection with the hotel. We have just placed our order for electric lighting, lifts, engines, etc., and one about the chandeliers, globes, etc., I will place at Berlin on my way to Trieste, from whence I start in company of Ratanji and his wife on the 3rd of next month by the *S. S. Imperator*. In conclusion, let me trust that you will free your mind from the suspicion that I distrust your taste in architecture and cognate subjects."

On Monday the 15th October, he gave a dinner to some hundred Parsees in Rosebery Hall at Kingston-on-Thames. It was said to be the largest gathering of the community ever held west of Suez. The occasion was the festival of Pateti, the Parsee New Year. Jamsetji's generous hospitality was long remembered afterwards. It was unrivalled in the history of the Parsee community in England. No expense was spared and no detail overlooked. For the entertainment of his guests, Jamsetji chartered a pleasure steamer

from Westminster Pier to Kingston. The afternoon was cool and rainless, though dull. Cruising up-river, the party enjoyed the beauties of the Thames valley, the trees on the banks touched by early autumn's colours. The saloon served out abundant refreshments during the four-hour journey. On reaching Rosebery Hall, the guests spent the interval before dinner strolling on the extensive lawns, roaming about the town or just enjoying one another's company in the reception room. It was a little after seven o'clock when they were summoned to dinner. Not only was it a numerous party, but it contained several very eminent personalities. Jamsetji welcomed the guests in simple, brief terms, saying that his work had simply been to bring them together, and he expressed the hope that the Parsee New Year would be celebrated annually in the future.

The toast, when it came, was received with musical honours: it was drunk with enthusiasm and sincerity. Jamsetji, however, modestly insisted on thinking that the kind and elaborate compliments paid him "savoured of flattery".

On the 24th September, Jamsetji left for the United States on a short visit. There he tried to shun publicity as much as possible, seeing interviewers only when he could not evade them or turn them over to his New York agent. When he did see one, he would talk about his schemes. Yet he was exposed to the full glare of publicity. The American Press printed many articles about him, not always accurate. At times they were amusing, presenting a strange blend of fact and fiction, being the evident products of rich and riotous imaginations. According to a Cleveland writer, Jamsetji was "the J. P. Morgan of the East Indies", his partner being "the Nizam of Hyderabad". A Grand Rapids newspaper described him as "the richest man in all India and one of the wealthiest men in the entire world. ...So rich that he had little idea of his own wealth, his possessions even

exceeding those of the late Li Hung Chang, who was reckoned the richest man in the world". It also observed (perhaps recording the disappointment of its reporter) that "he was not inclined to be communicative". The *Birmingham Ledger* asserted with confidence that "he enjoys the distinction of having refused to be knighted by Queen Victoria at the sacrifice of his religion", and that he "wore a large diamond in his shirt". To the *Birmingham News*, he was "John N. Tata". Not all the articles, however, were fictitious. Some of them were strictly factual and presented a faithful picture of the man and his work.

After a few days' stay in New York, Jamsetji proceeded to Washington. Here, his acquaintance John W. Foster, ex-Secretary of State, entertained him. The New York papers had already given publicity to his scheme for the working of the Chanda ore. *The Washington Post* described him, not inaccurately, as "merchant prince, manufacturer, and importer, and likewise philanthropist, scholar, and philosopher".

The last town he visited was Pittsburg in Pennsylvania, one of the foremost centres of iron and steel production, set in the heart of an excellent coal-field and within easy reach of the rich iron-ore deposits of the Lake Superior region. Here he met George Westinghouse of the Westinghouse Company, the inventor of the airbrake. With his hydro-electric scheme in mind, Jamsetji visited Niagara Falls to see the plant used there for the generation of power. Westinghouse entertained Jamsetji at Solitude, his Homewood residence. But it was the topic of iron and steel that was uppermost in his mind at this time, and it was at Pittsburg that he met Julian Kennedy, the head of Julian Kennedy Sahlin and Company, a leading metallurgical engineering firm of international repute, specialising in steel plant design. Kennedy told him emphatically that before

such a costly enterprise could be undertaken, it was necessary to carry out a thorough and scientific investigation of the local conditions, the raw materials and the Indian markets. He advised him that Charles Page Perin, a famous New York consulting engineer, would be the best person to undertake the necessary preliminary studies and investigations.

Jamsetji was now determined to go ahead with his scheme. On the 26th October he was back in New York, where he met Perin and enlisted his services. Their first meeting was not without a touch of drama. Describing the interview, Perin later wrote: "I was poring over some accounts in the office when the door opened and a man in strange garb entered. He walked in, leaned over my desk and looked at me for fully a minute in silence. Finally, he said in a deep voice, 'Are you Charles Page Perin?' I said, 'Yes.' He stared at me again silently for a long time. Then slowly he said, 'I believe I have found the man I have been looking for. Julian Kennedy has written to tell you that I am going to build a steel plant in India. I want you to come to India with me to find suitable iron ore and coking coal and the necessary fluxes. I want you to take charge as my consulting engineer. Mr. Kennedy will build the steel plant wherever you advise and I will foot the bill. Will you come to India with me?'"

The proposal was sudden, and so, Perin continues, "I was dumbfounded, naturally. But you don't know what character and force radiated from Tata's face. And kindness too. Well, I said yes, I'd go. And I did. But not just then. I sent my partner, Weld, over first to scout the raw-materials situation."

Perin was referring to C. M. Weld, a geologist who, in spite of his seemingly slender physical frame, was a man of outstanding energy and capacity. Weld sailed for

Bombay almost immediately. Jamsetji left New York a few days later, reaching London on the 25th November, and after four days in England, rushed off to Germany, where he concluded the contract for the electric lighting plant for the Taj, and, at the beginning of December, left Trieste for Bombay by an Austrian Lloyd steamer. Ratanji Tata and his wife, who had accompanied Jamsetji to the United States, though not on his visits to the iron and steel centres, were with him on this return trip. They reached Bombay and two days later Jamsetji left for Delhi to attend, as a private person, the Imperial Coronation Durbar held by Lord Curzon, marking the accession of King Edward the VII. Lovat Fraser, who met him in the arena of the amphitheatre shortly before the Durbar on New Year's morning, clad in his usual simple white dress, was surprised to find that he did not figure among the official guests, and wrote: "There is something lacking in a method of selection which omitted one of India's most prominent men from the list of official guests."

During his recent visit to England, Jamsetji had seen Lord George Hamilton about his Research Institute, but not to much purpose. On the 30th March, 1903, in reply to a question asked in the House of Commons, Lord George Hamilton stated: "I understand that Mr. Tata's scheme for a scientific research institution is, for the time being, in abeyance. I do not propose to publish any correspondence on the subject." In May, however, under evident pressure from the India Office, the Government of India declared their willingness to make a grant of £2,000 a year to the Institute, and requested Jamsetji to have the property transferred to the Treasurer of Charitable Endowments. The scheme was thus made once more alive. Whilst in England, Jamsetji had also explained his hydro-electric scheme to Lord George Hamilton. He did so with such clarity and

force that the Secretary of State was greatly impressed, and forwarded the entire correspondence to Lord Northcote, the Governor of Bombay.

Jamsetji also had a number of successful meetings with Lord Northcote. All the preliminaries of the scheme were dealt with swiftly and effectively. Speed of action was essential as another group, the Pioneer, was making headway with a rival scheme for the generation of electricity by steam-power. Jamsetji believed in competition and, in the words of Dorabji, he "laboured to establish the principle that the Government and the Municipality should not grant any monopoly for the sale of electrical energy to the Pioneer or any other company that might be formed".

Jamsetji had not only planned the scheme in detail; his standing and skill as a negotiator had enabled him to enlist the blessings of India Office, thus facilitating the work of his successors and ensuring the eventual success of his scheme.

It was in 1905, a year after Jamsetji's death that Dr. John Mannheim, an electrical expert from the British firm of Messrs Alfred Dickinson and Company, came to India in connection with the hydro-electrification of Lahore. When he heard of the Lonavla scheme, he contacted Tatas in Bombay and obtained the consent of the syndicate to float, if necessary, a new syndicate on his return to London. Such a syndicate was formed under the style of the Bombay Hydro-Electric Syndicate Limited, with Messrs Alfred Dickinson and Company as consulting engineers. All this time, work was still forging ahead on the iron and steel project.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

PROSPECTING FOR INDUSTRY (1903)

ON his return from England Jamsetji asked Dorabji to join Weld and Shapurji Saklatvala*, one of his nephews, in the iron and steel venture. Saklatvala was at this time leading a preliminary prospecting expedition. The journey was fraught with anxieties and difficulties and the presence of rival prospectors did not lighten their burden. Lord Curzon, for example, had sent out a party to investigate iron-ore deposits in "the Jabalpur district". But this did not worry Jamsetji who knew that this area was notably lacking in workable iron-ore deposits. Soon the patience of all the competitors ran out; but, continuing their search. Weld and Saklatvala were able to confirm that Chanda had reasonable quantities of iron and limestone. There was, however, a lack of coal in the area and this prevented the iron and steel project from going ahead in this district. Weld informed Jamsetji of this fact, yet the latter asked him to stay on and make an exhaustive study of the iron and steel position anywhere in the country.

Accompanied by Dorabji and Shapurji Saklatvala, Weld went to Nagpur to tell Sir Benjamin Robertson that the ore at Chanda was unworkable. When Weld mentioned that they suspected large iron deposits to be present in the Drug district, near Raipur, Sir Benjamin produced a long-forgotten report of 1887 made by the geologist P. N. Bose, stating that the district was rich in iron ore. This discovery

* He later became a Socialist member of the British Parliament.

set them hot on the trail, and when Weld went to investigate the Dhalli and Rajhara hills in the stipulated region, "his footsteps rang beneath his feet as though he was walking on metal", as indeed he was. Here was an entire hill of solid iron ore. Furthermore, there was a reliable source of coking coal in the Jharia field in Bengal, relatively near the Dhalli Rajhara iron deposits. On examination it was discovered that the ore supply was rich and abundant and that coal from Jharia, when coked, could be used for smelting fine ore. The situation was largely satisfactory.

It was at this time that the sad news of Jamsetji's death reached them. Weld went to New York to report to Perin on the results of his investigations, and after discussions, Perin, Weld, Shapurji Saklatvala and Bose set out on a further expedition to ascertain the amount of ore present in the jungle. Several areas including Gorumahisani and Badampahar were outstanding in this respect. The party's wanderings in the jungle had yielded rich dividends. Later, the prospectors explored the limestone of Padampur.

In 1907, the scheme was launched. Because of a depression and because of the disbelief in England that a steel industry could be set up in India, Tatas failed to negotiate for finance in London and so offered shares to the public in India. The Tata offices in Bombay were besieged by an eager crowd of local investors. At the end of five weeks the entire capital needed for the construction requirements was secured. The quest now began for a site with a ready water supply; this led to the village of Sakchi and to the site of Jamshedpur.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A MAN OF TASTE AND DEEP HUMANITY (1903 continued)

THE year 1903 witnessed the opening of the Taj Mahal Hotel on the sea front at Bombay. It was (and remains to this day) an imposing structure, consisting of two vast wings with a central courtyard in between. There were domes crowning either wing and one centrally placed between them; the windows were glazed with tinted glass to eliminate glare; verandas and balconies ornamented the facade. It was India's first truly modern hotel.

Mention has already been made of Jamsetji Tata's Mahim Creek scheme. It was, however, merely a prelude to a much grander scheme, boldly conceived but never executed. Fascinated by the loveliness of Venice, and as always dreaming of how he could bring to India the best of what he had seen abroad, he thought of building a Venice in Bombay. Some twelve hundred acres of low-lying land, interlaced with shallow creeks could, he thought, well be adapted to this purpose. Sea-water could enter through two wide inlets on the north and south, flooding the area at high tide up to a depth of some three feet. Jamsetji planned to reclaim 500 acres of land for 500 one-acre building plots and to create a network of canals. Two sluice-gates, one at each end of the system, would regulate the flow of fresh tide-water every day to maintain the water at the required level. The soil from the excavations would supply foundation material for the housing colony, while the neighbouring hills would provide ample earth and stone. Thus the reclamation costs would be reduced and the scheme made economically sound.

It was not only another Venice that Jamsetji sought to recreate: he was also thinking of building a second Brighton in Bombay. For this purpose, he had in mind the island of Juhu Tara with its long sandy beach and healthy air. He had built a small bungalow here in which he used to entertain his friends. The scheme was not merely visionary but eminently practical, and the Government adopted it eagerly as their own scheme. But it made no progress during his lifetime, and must be counted among the many far-seeing ventures which he had conceived in the larger interests of the community but which he had to leave to posterity to complete.

As we have seen, Jamsetji was among the first to own a car in Bombay, having bought one as early as 1903. Horse-driven carriages were still the fashion. Certainly, expert car mechanics or chauffeurs were relatively rare. One day, accompanied by his estate agent, Jamsetji Saklatvala, Jamsetji was being driven to Ghod Bandar. On reaching an incline, the car struggled and stopped. He left the car and hesitatingly took his share of the labour that was necessary. He and his companion together with a solitary passer-by, a peasant, pushed the car up the gradient.

Many men, if engaged on business, often tend to live with their business problems most of the time, leaving some sides of their personality undeveloped. But Jamsetji Tata was a notable exception. Though always a little reserved and reticent, his sensitivity, his kindness and warm human sympathy remained undiminished till the end. Because of his sensitivity, the daily frustrations and irritations, which are the inevitable lot of all men and which all have to bear, wounded him unusually deeply and intensely. Gradually he schooled himself to bear them philosophically. But his reaction to difficulties was always strong and this gave strength to his purpose. As the years went by, his sensitivity to the

suffering of others grew and his capacity for sympathy deepened. A friend of his, Sir Lawrence Jenkins, Chief Justice of Bombay, speaking in March 1905, shortly after Jamsetji's death, referred to his sympathy as being "no empty phrase", but "a living force" adding, "I myself have seen his eyes fill with tears when speaking of the poor and the hardships of their lives." Instances of his practical thoughtfulness abound. Once, when discussing the cotton seed industry with O'Connor, Jamsetji agreed that it could be commercially converted into oil, but added: "If we buy up the seed, what will the poor people do for their cattle feed?" Even where his own interests were involved, he could never forget the poor nor overlook their needs. The imposition of excise duties on cotton, and the exemption from them of the cloth woven by innumerable poor handloom weavers in the country, had doubtless introduced competition to the relative disadvantage of the cotton mill industry. But Jamsetji would not dream of advocating the extension of the excise duties to them. He said, "Let the poor devils have the advantage, I don't mind."¹ As he grew in years, he seemed to become more remote and somewhat awe-inspiring.

Jamsetji had views about the dignity of man that were perhaps in advance of his time—more particularly when it concerned servants. For example, by the time his son Dorab came to be married, Jamsetji's personal servant (between whom and Jamsetji there had developed a great affection) was an old man. With his thoughtfulness Jamsetji had told the servant that there was no need, now that he was old, to rise from his chair every time Jamsetji appeared. When Meherbai (his son's bride) joined the household, not being familiar with Jamsetji's liberal attitudes, she was surprised and hurt at the lack of formality in the old servant's attitude.

¹J. E. O'Connor to Mr. Lovat Fraser

She reported the matter to Jamsetji, who gently but firmly explained that respect and thoughtfulness were due to old people, no matter of what class.

He did not always remember that others did not possess his application, his vision and his capacity for total devotion to any plans upon which he was working. This sometimes made him impatient and, to some, even irritable. We have seen earlier how a letter from his son, which he considered did not give an adequate explanation of business affairs during his absence abroad, provoked a vitriolic reply. If, however, he found himself in the wrong and his somewhat hasty outbursts perhaps unwarranted, his innate sense of fairness would always prompt him to retreat with grace and apologise. For example, he followed up his earlier, critical letter to Dorabji with another, in which he wrote: "I must again express my regrets that owing to some hasty conclusions I have been led to think unjustly, and make unjust remarks about some of you in this connection." As he realised that his son had been right and would therefore have been hurt by his father's chidings, he added by way of encouragement: "But this only serves to show me that your heart is in this work, and it gives me tremendous hopes of the success of our project, as I know very well how you can work about anything you have set your heart on. Mind this is not only for the good and benefit of our firm or family, but for that of our community."

In spite of his hastiness, he had deep reserves of calm and events that might have shaken most men would generally leave him unruffled. One occasion when his reserves of calm failed him was when he thought that his elder son had been killed in an accident. Then he became distraught with sorrow and anxiety.

He took great interest in his various homes. Esplanade House in its general design and in many of its details was

his own brain-child. He was of course not infallible as a connoisseur of art or architecture. His broad and all-embracing taste tended, sometimes, to lead him into incongruities. But he always had a clear conception of what he wanted. At Esplanade House, for example, he made it clear to the architect that he wanted a suitable place for his curios and a library spacious enough for his books. Dorabji sometimes prevailed upon him to change his ideas in these matters; but generally Jamsetji did not relish contradiction. He built extensively and his estates were his delight. He would visit his houses at Matheran, Navsari, Ootacamund or Bangalore from time to time, raising new plants and breeding mules and other animals on an experimental basis. He loved to receive visits from friends who shared his interests. In December there would be the usual family gathering at Navsari, with his wife, sisters and the other ladies staying at the old house in the town, and the menfolk at the new one in the park. They would all drive down to Navsari for the occasion in their victorias and other conveyances. At Christmas time, the ancient and sleepy town would take on a new and livelier appearance and buzz with activity. There would be an influx of Parsee families from Bombay, mostly affluent, all fashionably clad, filling the old family houses, and bringing new life and colour to Navsari. The town can never forget what Jamsetji and his family did for its people. His father Nusserwanji and his cousin R. D. Tata endowed two schools here, and he himself established a third, and also gave to the town a public park and a menagerie. Navsari week, as it was called, was a week of festivities, in which prizes were given to school children and presents to older people, and there would be sports and a distribution of prizes and garlands to mark the end of the celebrations.

Jamsetji's life and pleasures were simple; he took no particular joy in ostentation. His main delight lay in the development of his schemes, whether commercial or philanthropic. For the rest, his whole life was based on simplicity. His capacity for industry and application was extraordinary. It was only while travelling that he found time for rest. He (and, under his tireless guidance, his firm) worked day in and day out without ceasing. Only on Sundays and on one or two major holidays during the year was there any respite. If the office closed on any other occasion, Jamsetji would go there alone, for his days had to be filled with activity. He would rise early in the morning, stroll briefly along the sea-front, call his carriage and drive round to visit friends, some of whom might still be asleep. Then he would return home for the family breakfast, read or write a little, go to the office at midday and then work until six in the evening. When the day was done, he would go for a drive or visit the Elphinstone Club for a game of chowpat or for a chat with his old friends. On returning home, he would eat his dinner with zest and relish and then seek his study and his books.

Jamsetji was not particularly fond of social life. Nor was he dedicated to outdoor activities, except for an occasional sailing trip or boating and picnic party with friends which he enjoyed immensely. But he knew the value of athletics and encouraged his son Dorabji to take them up while at Cambridge. When Dorabji won his College colours at cricket and football, when he coxed his college boat and distinguished himself on the cinder-track, Jamsetji would talk with understandable parental pride of his son's accomplishments. He loved driving and was a connoisseur of horses, being the proud owner of an excellent stable, containing pedigree Arabs, English Hackneys and Hungarians.

Jamsetji, who travelled greatly, was always anxious to

learn and to gather impressions. His mind was always full of curiosity and he would generally plan his foreign tours to fit in with some important exhibitions. Thus he could see the latest developments and most modern advances in science or industry. He loved to pick up novel items, either because they appealed to his fancy or because he felt that his country should see these new ideas and benefit from the knowledge of them. He was always an innovator. His house in Bombay was the first to be equipped with electricity, his carriages were the first to be rubber-tyred and he was among the first to own a motor-car in Bombay. He bought a cinematograph on one of his visits and the first moving pictures in India were shown at his house. Though he was not musical, he purchased an electrical piano. Little that was new escaped his immense curiosity.

He was a great admirer of the English language. Not only did he write English with grace and fluency, but had also made it his common medium of speech. He was an engaging conversationalist and enjoyed amusing stories. He could be sarcastic at times, but there was no malice in him. In his religious attitudes he was not strictly orthodox as his father had been. Wide and flexible in his views, he was not without a tinge of scepticism. He would take nothing on trust, nor accept anything unless it stood the test of reason. He made no conscious effort to impress others, nor to attract their attention. Above all, it was his astonishing versatility that impressed his hearers most. He could discuss almost any topic with deep knowledge and understanding. Once, on board ship on his way to the United States, with plenty of time on his hands, he began to talk about his many journeys across the globe. He spoke of everything that he had seen—flowers, strange stars and distant lands. All that he said, and the eloquent manner of the telling, drew to him an increasing number of listeners from among

the passengers. More and more gathered round him, enthralled by the fascinating words of this kind and patriarchal figure.

An avid reader, who took delight in his books, he had a remarkable memory and he was given to taking notes systematically. His taste in reading was wide-ranging and his knowledge encyclopaedic. Whether politics or economics, horticulture or philosophy, some technical topic or a matter connected with travel, he could assimilate knowledge swiftly and in depth. Biography, novels and humorous literature also appealed to him. He was also interested in medical matters, and when he was seriously ill he made a thorough study of his own illness. When the currency controversy was raging, he studied economics; when the bubonic plague was taking its toll in Bombay, he read every available book and pamphlet relating to the various plagues and to the background of the disease.

His robust and down-to-earth attitude to religion was long remembered with humour and pleasure. After his death, a group of his Parsee friends commissioned a portrait of Jamsetji to be hung in one of the Bombay fire temples. When the work was completed, it was brought to his sister Jerbai Saklatvala to confirm that the likeness was good. She had intimate memories of her brother. Congratulating the artist on the likeness and the workmanship, she pointed out that in an excess of zeal, the artist had depicted Jamsetji holding a prayer-book, the *Zend Avesta*. With an affectionate smile she remarked that this was not in the least typical of her brother. It would have been far more likely for him to be holding a business letter! The prayer-book was duly painted out and a letter substituted.

Although a teetotaler, he was excessively fond of food and kept an excellent table. Every day he would enjoy dishes rich in fat and spices, with a complete disregard for

the limits of human digestion. He had plenty of medical books in his library and made a careful study of his own disabilities, but nothing tempered his love of food. "I think I could digest a stone," he would reply, when doctors or friends advised moderation in eating for reasons of health. He continued to indulge his taste and eventually, perhaps inevitably, this incurable weakness of his gave him shortness of breath and a fatty heart. As time passed, his condition became worse. He suffered from insomnia and dull, dyspeptic pains, and his heart was working under increased strain. His physician could do very little but offer advice that was rejected. He would not control his diet. Having led a life of superhuman activity for so long, perhaps he felt the need for the renewal of energy through abundant food. Moreover, he found it impossible to be doing nothing, and rest was repugnant to him. His habits were set and he was too stubborn to change them in the slightest degree.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

EPILOGUE—THE LAST DAYS (1904)

LATE in 1903 when his doctors had done all that they could, though with little success, they advised treatment at Bad Nauheim in Germany, a watering-place very popular with heart patients. But Jamsetji had determined to go to Burma or to the Persian Gulf. So, completely disregarding his doctors' advice and that of his relatives, he said in impatient and irritated tones, "No, no, I want to go to the Persian Gulf." It was not easy to make him change his mind. At last his cousin R. D., knowing Jamsetji's thoughtfulness for others, thought of a device. He said that he himself was ill and would like to visit Egypt, suggesting that if Jamsetji also accompanied him, both of them would benefit from the change. Jamsetji, because another's health was involved, at once agreed to this suggestion. Nevertheless, though aware of the seriousness of his own illness, he refused to let a doctor go with them, saying that he did not like being fussed over or mollicoddled.

His son Dorabji and the latter's wife, Meherbai, who were already in Egypt, went to Suez to receive him. Within six hours of their arrival, R. D. started back for India, making it obvious to Jamsetji, if it was not so already, that his was only a pretended illness. Jamsetji, with his son and daughter-in-law, then proceeded to Cairo where he began to feel better. His mind had never ceased to be active. He met a business correspondent casually, and discussed with him ways and means of developing his business ventures in the Levant. But his old habits, his old stubbornness, returned

before long. He disregarded all precautions about his health, ignoring the doctor's instructions. He loved his daughter-in-law and would sometimes heed her advice, but not always. His Goan personal servant, Abek, who was invariably with him during his travels, was able to persuade him to engage a masseur, but this served hardly any other purpose than to make him even more wayward.

It was now February 1904 and too cold for him to go to Vienna to consult the well-known specialist, Dr. Nothnagel, as planned; he, therefore, accepted the latter's suggestion to proceed instead to San Remo, which the doctor would be visiting in a few weeks. The party left for Naples, *en route* to San Remo. Here, while travelling they received the tragic news of the death of Jamsetji's wife. She had been ill for some time, but appeared to be improving when he left Bombay. It was a paralytic stroke that had brought on the fatal climax. Although he bore the tidings bravely, he was stunned by the initial impact. After a few days had gone by, he dictated a letter to his other daughter-in-law, Navajbai, committing his ailing sister and his wife's two nieces to her custody. He also arranged with his younger son to put aside a sum of thirty-five thousand rupees for a midwives' fund in Navsari in memory of his wife.

All the while, his health continued to deteriorate. The oedema worsened, rendering it necessary to tap his legs to bring down the swelling. Travelling from Naples through Rome, Florence and Genoa, Jamsetji and his son reached San Remo at the beginning of April. Dr. Nothnagel came and examined him, and was concerned about the gravity of his condition. Jamsetji alternated between partial recovery and further relapse: during the moments of recovery, his stubbornness would reappear to the despair of those around him. To curb his inquisitiveness* was simply impossible. He would, for instance, visit a poor-class restaurant to see how

the humbler folks ate or, accompanied by his servant, go to the market place and eat fruit. His mind began to dwell on the possibilities of growing the date commercially in India and tapping the Italian palm-trees for toddy. He bought fruit-trees for his Panchgani Estate, peacocks for his Navsari gardens, wolf-hounds, Italian greyhounds for their high-stepping action, and several Bosnian and Croatian horses for himself and for the hotel. In what was probably his last letter, he ordered two oil-driven motors for the yacht he was building in Bombay. His curiosity was unconquerable and his spirit, even in illness, indomitable.

Sir George King, a former Curator of the Calcutta Botanical Gardens and authoritative writer on Indian plants, who was staying at the same hotel as Jamsetji was, at his own request, taken in to see him. They discussed trees and their cultivation for an hour or so. Sir George had no idea that Jamsetji knew so much about this specialised subject and said to Dorabji after the meeting: "I am surprised at the marvellous information your father has on all things connected with what I thought was my line. Though I am a botanist, I learned several things from him!"

From San Remo, Jamsetji and his son travelled on to Vienna, where they were joined by Dr. Row. Hugo Schweiger, a paper manufacturer who had experimentally supplied paper to the Svadeshi Mills, came to ask Jamsetji and his son to give him a large order for paper. Dorabji declined to comply, saying that the trials had not yielded satisfactory results and that English paper was definitely better in quality and cheaper in price than the Austrian. But Herr Schweiger persisted in his request for the order. The old man knew the moment to strike. For twenty years or more in his own quiet, unobtrusive way, he had studied the paper-making process, 'attaining complete mastery of it. Thus when the paper manufacturer's stubborn persistence

led Jamsetji to treat him to a long discourse on the subject, Schweiger was not only bewildered by the depth of his knowledge but felt completely discomfited and ashamed. He left, never daring to ask for another order again.

Although Jamsetji's health was fast declining, he would have long periods of lucidity when his mind and intellect would be as active as ever and his conversation in full flow. Nor did he abandon hope: he was still planning for the future and told his son that he intended to entertain at least a hundred Parsees in London on the occasion of the next Parsee New Year. But the sands of his life were fast running out. In the second week of May, accompanied by Dr. Row, he went to Bad Nauheim. His son remained behind in Vienna for a minor operation. His cousin R. D., his nephew Beram Saklatvala (then studying in Berlin) and his friend Kanga, an eminent Bombay lawyer, joined him at Bad Nauheim. His interest in current affairs was still alive, though fitfully. Dorabji wrote to Baron Shibusawa in Japan on the 13th August, 1904: "Even up to the last he took the deepest interest in Japan and was enthusiastic about the brilliant achievements of the Japanese forces, and believed in their success." His own business continued to occupy his mind fully. The news of the Empress Mills' good performance cheered him. He spoke of his life's ideals and motivations, exhorting his followers to carry forward the work he had started, and said: "If you cannot make it greater, at least preserve it. Do not let things slide. Go on doing my work and increasing it, but if you cannot, do not lose what we have already done." He would talk about his Navsari home, and about his youngest sister, his young nephew's mother whom he loved so much. He solemnly entrusted her to the care of his sons and cousin.

Jamsetji now knew that his end was near. Death, he said, had no terrors for him. But he longed to see his two

sons, his "dear lads" as he called them, and cried: "Where are you and why don't you come to see me? Where is Dorab? Where is Dorab?"—he kept crying. On the 17th May he grew suddenly worse. Dorabji and his wife arrived on the 18th May, and Jamsetji, who by sheer will-power had managed to live to see them, spoke to them most lovingly. On the 19th May he died peacefully in his sleep.

It was after his death that his two greatest dreams were realised. Lord Minto, the Viceroy, approved the constitution of the Institute of Science in Bangalore in 1909. In time this was to become one of the foremost centres of scientific learning in India. The central building, housing the library and senate hall, is classical in style. In one relief, there is the figure of Jove and his thunderbolts; Vulcan the god of fire and metal-working with his anvil symbolises the metallurgical industries. In another relief, Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, is seen holding a flax-covered distaff, as a symbol of the textile industry. Calliope the Muse depicts research. There is a bronze rail with a lamp of learning at its centre, and dolphins flanking it, representing Jamsetji's travels. The central shaft is buttressed by Abundance at one end and Knowledge at the other, and culminates in the founder's bronze statue, bearing an eloquent inscription as a reminder to posterity of the princely munificence and selfless labours in the cause of higher education of one who was not only a great industrial genius, but also a great and farsighted patriot.

In 1911 the first iron flowed from the blast furnace of the Tata Iron and Steel Company at Sakchi. Around the Steel works there has grown a great city. Many years later, in 1940, in a letter to Sir Jehangir Ghandy, then General Manager and later Director-in-Charge of the Steel Company, Sir Thomas Holland, formerly Director-General of the Geological Survey, wrote nostalgically of the Steel

Company's beginnings: "The references to the striking results of this past year recall very vividly the thoughts which C. M. Weld and I toyed with over 30 years ago when we explored the jungle-covered tongue of land between the Subarnarekha and Khorkai rivers for a suitable site, and selected the small village of Sakchi as the nucleus of what we predicted would be a great city some day."

The great city of the prophecy now bears the proud name of Jamshedpur, so called after Jamsetji Tata. It was upon his dreams that its foundations were laid and it is a fitting memorial to this great man. Today his bronze statue, heroic in size as Jamsetji was in spirit, gazes out over the rose-filled park of the city where the workers stroll and take their pleasure and where the children play among the dancing fountains. Behind the statue loom the gaunt structures of the Works, now with a capacity of two million tons of steel a year. The Works dominate the landscape for miles—a column of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night—as the mind and work of Jamsetji still tower in the industrial landscape of India. His work was outstanding not by virtue of the profits he made, nor by the wealth he accumulated, but by the simplicity and directness of his purpose. Each of his enterprises was an answer to the question that was for ever in his mind—what does India need now?

So the brooding statue, the stark works and the flowered park stand together above the river—the man himself, the industry he conceived and founded, and the park which symbolises the happier land of which he dreamed.

And on the base of the statue are the words:

"If you seek a monument, look around!"

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